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Style in E.M Forster's Howards End

University — Université

U of A

Degree for which thesis was presented — Grade pour lequel cette thèse fut présentée

M/A

Year this degree conferred — Année d'obtention de ce grade	Name of Supervisor — Nom du directeur de thèse
1979	Dr. Robert Merrett

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STYLE IN E. M. FORSTER'S HOWARDS END

by

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JOANNE ELLISON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1979

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Style in E. M. Forster's Howards End" submitted by Joanne Ellison in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis which follows explores the style of E. M. Forster's Howards End in order to determine how Forster uses rhetorical devices to lead the reader to certain moral conclusions about the novel. The major critics of E. M. Forster have concentrated their work on his ideas rather than on his style, and, because of this, certain ironies involving character and plot have been missed. The two major critical points which can be modified in the discussion of Howards End are Forster's attitudes towards Margaret and Henry, and the author's moral position at the end of the novel. Although most critics view Margaret's perspective as the dominant one, and Forster's morality in the novel as one of irresponsibility, it is clear, from a study of imagery, of irony and of narrative stance in Howards End that those critical values should be reassessed. It is a reassessment which should take place not only in Howards End but also in all of Forster's works.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It has been common procedure in Forster criticism since the advent of Rose Macaulay to attempt book-length surveys of his work. The surveys generally adopt two approaches. The first is a non-thematic approach, which considers that Forster wrote five novels, two books of short stories and a number of essays, and that each work is a separate entity, which can be evaluated on its own. The second is a thematic approach which has the same considerations, but attempts to place the novels in a pattern, to see each one as a stepping-stone in the novelist's development. In both approaches, the critic discusses ideas primarily, and, as a result, the analysis of Forster's style is relegated to a secondary status. But, Forster's major talents were those of the ironist and the stylist; by manipulating diction, syntax, imagery, and narrative in certain ways, he creates effects which can only be understood by a close look at style. This is a process, however, which has been generally neglected in the criticism of Forster's writings.

One of the first critics to attempt an intelligent evaluation of Forster was Lionel Trilling. The first chapter of Trilling's book concerns itself with the dichotomies inherent in Forster's philosophy and shows that Forster was at once both a liberal and at war with the basic tenets of liberalism. That is, where liberalism acknowledges the distinction between good and evil in the world, Forster sees them as inseparable; evil necessarily influences good and vice versa; absolute judgement is impossible.[1] The discussion of Forster's liberalism pervades

Trilling's work, a work which is relatively fresh and uninfluenced by previous critics. He sees the novels not as a progression towards A Passage to India, but as self-contained entities with Howards End representing the high-point of Forster's career.[2] Trilling's ideas are perceptive and acute, and his comments on style, incidental though they are, represent a knowledge of Forster's irony, which is alien to the majority of critics. A primary characteristic of Forster's style, according to Trilling, is his "unbuttoned manner," and it is an indication that Forster ". . . fears power and suspects formality as the sign of power."[3] Trilling says that Forster is sometimes "irritating in his refusal to be great,"[4] but the comment, though it is provocative and right to the point, is never developed further.

Frederick Crews takes a slightly more thematic approach than that of Trilling. He documents the origin and development of Forster's humanism, where a humanist is defined as ". . . a man who disbelieves in all authority and order not verified by himself. . . ."[5] Crews sees the development of Forster's humanism as a perilous one; A Room with a View and Where Angels Fear to Tread are finely-crafted, tight works, which are, however, somewhat superficial. The Longest Journey, on the other hand, discusses complicated, serious ideas, but suffers in terms of artistry; and Howards End combines the seriousness of The Longest Journey and the artistry of the Italian novels. Howards End, according to Crews, is forced; the comic conclusion to the novel is somewhat antithetical to its major purpose, but it is still the only serious novel which ". . . projects a reasonable hope for the survival of liberalism."[6] In A Passage to India, characters can neither understand themselves nor their world and, as such, humanism, the individual's attempt to verify order, dies. Crews's

criticism is well-documented and understandable. The thematic approach, strained as it can be, is offset by a perceptive chapter on Forster's comic spirit, which documents the influence upon him of Butler, Meredith and Austen. Crews introduces, in this chapter, some major stylistic concerns, especially to do with Forster's "dominant attitude of self-belittlement."[7] But, as with Trilling, the point is never fully developed.

Wilfred Stone, in a third study, also sets up a thematic introduction. The opening chapters of his book document the dichotomies inherent in Forster's world, between Coleridge and Bentham, between the Claphamites and the Apostles, between the Thorntons and the Whichelos. From here, Stone concentrates on a full analysis of each novel, which is usually perceptive and intelligent. Sometimes, however, he exaggerates a Freudian element in Forster's work which leads to a faulty interpretation of the novels. Such a problem occurs in the discussion of Howards End: "Houses are feminine symbols. Will any 'key' of Henry Wilcox open Howards End, or any house? . . . The novel really leads to an overwhelming question: Do any men, in fact, possess the credentials for inhabiting these houses?"[8] Though the sexual theme may be a part of Howards End, it would be muddle-headed to agree with Stone that it is the "overwhelming question" in the novel. Still, Stone does make perceptive comments, especially concerning rhythm in Howards End,[9] and it is only to be regretted that there is not more of such commentary.

Richard Martin takes the most thematic approach of all the critics discussed. He concentrates on the idea of love in Forster's novels, shows how it changes to "tolerance" in Howards End,[10] and how it fails pessimistically in A Passage to India. Although Martin's thesis

concerning tolerance in Howards End is a provocative one, the thematic approach is necessarily limiting, since it excludes concepts which are important to the comprehensive understanding of individual novels. One might, with relevance, have shown how the tolerance is supported on a stylistic as well as on a thematic level. Nevertheless, one of Martin's major contributions to Forster criticism is his recognition of the importance of the essays, which have been, to this point, largely ignored. Martin realizes that the essays are a useful tool in the understanding of the novels: "That is, without the considerable, carefully documented evidence of the non-fictional writings, we would not be in a position to detect similar manifestations of Forster's own voice in the novels."[11] With this in mind, Martin devotes a chapter to Forster's "miscellaneous prose," but the chapter is general, and unfortunately, gives little indication of a typically Forsterian voice.

Two important points grow out of this brief survey of representative Forster criticism. First, although most critics recognize the intricacy and importance of style in Forster's novels, they yet focus their criticism on ideas, and style, as a result, becomes subsidiary. Second, critics seldom discuss the essays, even though they represent a major source for the understanding of Forster. By restricting my thesis to one novel, and using the essays for the purpose of comparison, I have hoped to right some of the critical deficiencies in studies of Forster. An analysis of imagery, irony, and narrative stance in Howards End shows that Forster is an accomplished stylist, and that correct analysis of his works depends upon close textual reading. This critical technique must extend eventually to all of Forster's works.

CHAPTER II

AN OVERVIEW OF STYLE

Forster's constant concern in Aspects of the Novel is the reconciliation of art with life. He realizes that art and life are contradictory, that the notion of story implies fiction, that even God, as author, is culpable: "'If God could tell the story of the universe, the universe would become fictitious.' For this is the principle involved."[1] With the realization, Forster proceeds one step further. Since art and life are contradictory, the novelist must show a preference for one or the other, and Forster, in contrast to James, is primarily in favour of life:

> It is this question of the rigid pattern: hour-glass or grand chain or converging lines of the cathedral or diverging lines of the catherine wheel, or bed of Procrustes--whatever image you like as long as it implies unity. Can it be combined with the immense richness of material which life provides? Wells and James would agree it cannot, Wells would go on to say that life must be given the preference, and must not be whittled or distended for a pattern's sake. My own prejudices are with Wells. (AN, p. 112)

Forster sees the problems of life and art which are inherent in any work of fiction. "Rigid" patterning, for him, implies a loss of life; the novelist's task must then be to limit "pattern," to use it sparingly, so that life is paramount, and art, subsidiary. It is a difficult balance to maintain, and critical commentary on Forster shows the delicacy of the problem.

Many of Forster's early critics comment on the artless aspects of his work. Criticism of The Longest Journey, summarized by Wilfred Stone

in The Cave and the Mountain, concentrates on the lack of artistry in the novel: "The sudden deaths, the laxity of the construction, the anemic quality of the hero, the 'abnormality' of the author's invention . . . ."[2] Virginia Woolf, on the other hand, baulks at the intrusive artistry of the novels, which results in a failure to capture daily life.[3] Alan Wilde, writing in 1964, provides a summary of the polar criticism, seeing Forster both as a highly conscious artist, and as a man who denies his art for life:

> One can understand, in the first place, why Forster looks with misgiving upon attempts to portray him as a highly conscious artist: he has always insisted that in his writing a good deal more "happens" than he foresees or deliberately plans. . . . In spite of his strictures, however, one is tempted to think of Forster himself as a careful and patient artist, aware of those symbols and rhythms in his novels which seem to indicate so much forethought and planning.[4]

The balance of life and art, of spontaneity and self-consciousness, a balance central to Forster's writing, is announced early in Howards End. Helen writes to Margaret: "I inflict all this on you because once you said that life is sometimes life and sometimes only a drama, and one must learn to distinguish tother from which. . . ."[5] From this point in the novel, Forster plays ironically with the problems of life and art. While giving the illusion of a life being lived, Forster simultaneously reminds the reader that he is functioning in the domain of art. It is this ironic tension between life and art existing at the level of diction, of syntax, and of phrasing, which has sometimes confused critics.

An identifying mark of Forster's style is the juxtaposition of a highly sophisticated lexicon with an easy, colloquial one. Even in his most serious writings, Forster hangs back from pretense, tempering the inflated with the mundane, the sophisticated with the colloquial.

Consider this passage as an example:

> Occasionally, too, a well-meaning public official starts losing his head in the cause of efficiency, and thinks himself God Almighty. Such officials are particularly frequent in the Home Office. Well, there will be questions about them in Parliament sooner or later, and then they will have to mind their steps.[6]

Forster's voice is curiously child-like here. Instead of assuming individual responsibility for public abuse, he delegates that authority to Parliament, as a child would to his parent. Parliament, given the role of parent, tells the public officials to "mind their steps," and Forster, adopting the role of a child, mimicks the parent's statement. By using the childish, colloquial phrase, Forster deliberately belittles himself, and ironically shows the mistake of forfeiting individual responsibility. The colloquial phrase gives the passage a conversational, informal tone remarkably like life; its effect is to relax the reader, to lure him into acceptance of Forster's ideas; as such, the colloquialism is an artistic device.

The juxtaposition of the life-like and the artistic is also evident in the diction of Howards End. Typical of this is the vocabulary of Mrs. Munt, who is both exceedingly formal and somewhat unintellectual at the same time. Aunt Juley's language, a strange mixture of formality and colloquialism, reflects her pretense at culture:

> Sooner or later the girls would enter on a process known as throwing themselves away, and if they had delayed hitherto it was only that they might throw themselves more vehemently in the future. They saw too many people at Wickham Place--unshaven musicians, an actress even, German cousins (one knows what foreigners are), acquaintances picked up at continental hotels (one knows what they are too). It was interesting, and down at Swanage no one appreciated culture more than Mrs. Munt; but it was dangerous, and disaster was bound to come. How right she was, and how lucky to be on the spot when the disaster came! (HE, pp. 28-29)

Although Mrs. Munt pretends at a highly sophisticated lexicon, it is clear, from the passage, that she is most at home with colloquialism. The narrator, standing behind and manipulating her language, comments ironically on her ideas of self. In the first sentence, Mrs. Munt uses the colloquial language of the trend-setter, "throwing themselves," but she qualifies it carefully with the more formal "known as." In the second part of the same sentence "throwing themselves" becomes an integral part of her vocabulary, unqualified by modifiers or quotation marks. By originally imposing and then relaxing the restrictive phrase, the narrator shows Mrs. Munt's susceptibility to linguistic trendiness. The trendiness is confirmed in the last sentence of the passage when Mrs. Munt reverts abruptly to the colloquialism "how lucky to be on the spot." Several ironies are at work in the passage. Mrs. Munt pretends at both trendiness and culture, but the reader realizes intuitively that her ideas are neither trendy nor cultured. She dislikes artists and musicians and acquaintances made abroad. By guiding her language from the formal to the colloquial, the narrator shows on a lexical level what is already apparent on an ideological level. Mrs. Munt pretends at formality and culture, but is really quite colloquial. And even more ironically, her colloquialisms, an attempt at trendiness, are old-fashioned and sterile. The juxtaposition of colloquialism and formality in Mrs. Munt's speech seems a life-like natural phenomenon, but, constantly aware of the narrator's manipulation of us, we realize that the artistry of the design is impacting on the naturalness of character speech, and we know, once again, the tension between colloquial and formal, between life and art.

A similar tension between the colloquial and the formal occurs

in the description of Leonard's room. Here, a formal lexicon reacts with a colloquial one, and both impact on a highly-structured descriptive formula:

> The sitting-room contained, besides the armchair, two other chairs, a piano, a three-legged table and a cosy corner. Of the walls, one was occupied by the window, the other by a draped mantelshelf bristling with Cupids. Opposite the window was the door, and beside the door a bookcase, while over the piano there extended one of the masterpieces of Maude Goodman. It was an amorous and not unpleasant little hole. . . . (HE, p. 60)

The passage is exceedingly stiff, mainly because of the formal verbs "contained," "occupied," and "extended." These, tempered by such colloquial words as "cosy" and "bristling," provide just the tension of colloquialism and formality that Forster desires. The formality is intensified by the rigid spatial patterning which is imposed on the room. Definite directions are given to the reader, but they are absolutely futile, for when we look in the direction asked, we find only emptiness. From the high formality of the lexicon and structure in the first part of the passage, the reader is brought abruptly to the bathetic and emotive word "hole." Forster uses the technique of bathos, of gradual deflation, to show the humor of applying pretentious language to simple situations. The description, aimed partially at Leonard's pretensions, is yet a rather modified one, the double negative, "not unpleasant" emphasizing the tentativeness of the narrative assertion.

It is tentativeness perhaps, an unwillingness to too obviously dictate to his reader, that gives Forster's diction its elusive quality. The narrative word-play which pervades his work is subtle, ingeniously placed to draw the reader away from, rather than to, the pun. An illusion of spontaneity, even in his most serious writing, is thus created:

> The economic pressure he feels is more often subconscious, and he goes to his exam merely feeling that a paper on King Lear is a tempestuous and terrible experience but an intensely real one. (AN, p. 6)

Forster chooses his words with extreme care here. He combines "terrible," an over-used, vague adjective with "tempestuous," an adjective, which in the context of Lear is delightfully appropriate. The vague meaning of "terrible" reflects on "tempestuous"; its effect is to draw the reader away from the importance of the first adjective. Instead of "foregrounding"[7] the pun, Forster carefully conceals it; the result is a shy unobtrusive humor, an unwillingness, on the author's part, to draw too much attention to the artistry of the pun.

Forster is similarly fond of punning in Howards End, and the word-play is as elusive in the novels as in the essays. Where puns are usually concentrated in a small area, a distance of two or three words apart, Forster breaks them up; words react on one another over a distance of several paragraphs, and most often reverberate through the length of the novel. The puns build on one another progressively, creating nuances of meaning and sometimes of form. Typical of this is Leonard's development throughout the novel. He changes slowly from "boy" to "man" to "cause" (HE, pp. 57, 131, 303), but the change is never without subtlety or humor. Before Leonard is first called a man, the narrator makes the following statement:

> That the Schlegels had not thought him foolish became a permanent joy. He was at his best when he thought of them. It buoyed him as he journeyed home beneath fading heavens. . . . No one felt uneasy as he tittuped along the pavements, the heart of a man ticking fast in his chest. (HE, p. 131)

At both a lexical and a structural level, this is Forster at his finest.

The word "buoyed" reinforces the sea image in the novel, puns subtly on the word "boy," prepares us for the contradiction of "man" in the final sentence of the chapter, and also subtly introduces us to a new verbal form, "boyed." The word looks both forward and backward, exposing and questioning. Textual distance between the words "boy" and "man" creates the elusive, spontaneous appeal Forster desires; one cannot, however, fail to see the artist at work.

Forster also uses puns in the domain of character speech, and the characters' recognition or ignorance of the pun is often a chance for authorial comment. Margaret, for instance, handles the language well, artistically. Always conscious of her puns, she heralds them with an introductory phrase "rather" or "as it were"; as such, the reader cannot fail to miss the point: "He is taking up his work--rubber--it is a big business. I gather he is launching out rather" (HE, p. 114). Leonard and Charles, on the other hand, are oblivious to the nuances of their speech. Leonard, who aspires to the literacy of Ruskin, begins to copy his sentences, but realizes that the aspiration can never have practical value. And Charles, though he pretends to be linguistically certain by using casual Latin derivatives "pater" and "mater" is yet quite uncertain; as shown by the incident with Crane and the car, Charles is easily defeated in argument (HE, p. 104). Forster plays humorously with the characters' inadequacies, punning on "spirit" and "apparition" in the case of Leonard: "'What ho!' said Leonard, greeting the apparition with much spirit" (HE, p. 63). And cracking literary jokes behind the back of Charles: "'Got what?' said Charles, unclasping her. 'What the dickens are you talking about?'" (HE, p. 104). Charles can obviously not understand the joining of his Christian name with that of Dickens.[8] The

spontaneous nature of Charles's and Leonard's speech collides forcefully with the artistry of the narrator's pun. In the sphere of diction, formality and colloquialism together with tentativeness and assertion provide just the combination of art and life which Forster desires.

Forster's syntax exhibits the same properties of art and artlessness as his diction. The serious judgements of his writings are tempered by an incredible insouciance, a casual disregard either for his own opinions or for the opinions of others. The cultured ease of "This brings me along to Democracy" ("What I Believe," TC, p. 83), is marvelously ironic, the difficulty of the ideological transition offset by the ease of the expressive transition. But what does one say about the first sentence of Howards End? How does the reader account for the disregard of "One may as well begin with Helen's letters to her sister" (HE, p. 19). The narrator adopts the impersonal third person pronoun in the first sentence; stepping back from the action, he implies his own objectivity and detachment. Margaret is unnamed; the narrator gives no impression of her importance in the novel; she is only Helen's sister. The modifiers of the verb, the auxiliary "may" and the adverb "as well," contribute to the Forsterian air of indifference in the sentence. The narrator implies that he has to start somewhere with these matters; it may as well be here.

The tone of artlessness and disregard begun in the first sentence repeats itself at various points throughout the novel. Such a statement as "Little need be premised about Tibby" (HE, p. 44) betrays a similar authorial disinterest. The narrator, who is the assumed subject of the sentence, has completely disappeared, and "little," an appropriate word for Tibby, takes over. But, typically, the sentence can be read in two ways with "little" acting either as an adjective or a noun, and "need"

acting either as a noun or an auxiliary verb. A similar tone occurs in a third statement, "A word on their origin" (HE, p. 42), which is as artless and indifferent as the first. The statement, possessing only a noun and a prepositional phrase, again leaves the narrator out of the action, and its incompleteness betrays a seeming disinterest with the conventions of form. The statement gives an impression of hurried informality, indicating a digression in the text and drawing the reader away from the importance of the description which follows. The use of loose, unconventional syntax shows the narrator's casual attitude to his story and sponsors a feeling in the reader of his inartistic methods. Its easiness gives us a sense of life removed from art, though we know intuitively that this is life functioning in the domain of art, and that the technique, seemingly inartistic, is really very calculated. As in his diction, Forster's syntax shows a tension between looseness and formality, between life and art.

Typical of this tension is Forster's handling of the various descriptions of Mrs. Wilcox. The first description comes from Helen's consciousness, in a letter written to Margaret: "And finally Mrs. Wilcox reappears, trail, trail, still smelling hay and looking at the flowers" (HE, p. 20). Helen's description is an impressionistic, emotional one; all her senses operate as she describes Mrs. Wilcox, smelling, looking, and trailing. The repetition of "trail" gives Helen's description of Mrs. Wilcox an onomatopoeic quality; the verb sounds like a dress trailing, and its form, a present participle honed down to a present tense verb, gives the impression of a continuing presence. The adverbs "finally" and "still" react against one another, the first implying long absence, the second, continuing presence. The adverb "still" gives the impression

of a woman who lives, even when she is outside the characters' thoughts, but while she is a living presence, there is yet something staged and artificial about her. The present tense verb "reappears" reacting against the adverb "finally" betrays a movement as graceful as any entrance on the stage.

To contrast with this first description, a second, more controlled portrait is given, only a few pages later:

> She approached just as Helen's letter had described her, trailing noiselessly over the lawn, and there was actually a wisp of hay in her hands. (HE, p. 36)

The syntax here is more regular than in the first quotation; the historical past tense alerts us to the distanced perspective of the teller, and the regular syntax creates a feeling of detachment, clearly opposed to the emotion of Helen's description. Even the sound of the trailing dress disappears; here it is "noiseless." The reader believes, originally, that the words come from Mrs. Munt's consciousness, but this is impossible; the letter was burnt. This, then, is the narrator's voice, entering into a conspiracy with the reader. The narrator bases his description on the authority of Helen's letter, and seems shocked by the efficacy of it. The word "actually" denotes his surprise at Helen's truthful representation of Ruth, and gives this second real-life meeting an air of spontaneity. The narrator's spontaneity is, however, clearly false, for, as presiding deity, he has not only surveyed the writing of Helen's letter, but also participated in her original meeting with Ruth. Two things are readily apparent. The narrator, by hanging back from omniscience, creates an air of spontaneity. Second and more importantly, the reader realizes the falseness of the spontaneity, and knows that this is narrative art

representing life.

Forster continues to play with the problems of life and art at various points throughout the novel. After Helen arrives home from Howards End and tells her story to Margaret, the narrator intrudes:

> That was 'how it happened', or, rather, how Helen described it to her sister, using words even more unsympathetic than my own. But the poetry of that kiss, the wonder of it, the magic that there was in life for hours after it--who can describe that? (HE, p. 38)

Forster again uses a controlled syntax to show the distinction between life and art. The first sentence consists of three parts, two clauses and one phrase, each part modifying the previous one. The arrangement of the sentence gives the impression of the narrator thinking to himself; in the first clause, he believes that this is 'how it happened.' In the second clause, he modifies his position; this is not 'how it happened,' but rather how Helen described it to her sister. In the last phrase, he modifies again; this is not Helen's description, but his own reworking of it. Through the syntax of the sentence, the reader is made aware of what he receives, something twice removed from the source. But another problem emerges. The quotation marks around 'how it happened' indicate the difficulty of definitive perception--Helen's assessment is different from the narrator's. With the quotation marks and commas, Forster indicates that life is essentially unknowable. Its translation into art makes it knowable, but does not necessarily guarantee the validity of the knowledge. It is an irreconcilable problem which emerges here. In life, things happen; in order to "know" them, we must give them form, artistic reconstruction, but in the retelling, the truth of the experience vanishes, and we are left with only an approximation. The query at the

end of the passage "who can describe that?" is thus a particularly apt and ironic one. The question indicates that Paul's kiss is beyond art, beyond retelling, that it has an insular, sustained reality, which would be falsified by art. In asking the question, however, the narrator categorizes the experience, transforms it into art, and gives us the approximation which is inevitable in the process. Truth, either in life or in art, is impossible; by asking the question, the narrator displays his fallibility. He warns us that we are approaching life through art, and although the process is inevitable, we must be aware of the dangers.

The distinction between life and art is something which Helen consistently fails to understand. Her appreciation of Beethoven rests on the translation of music into ideas. While the music plays, she visualizes goblins, and flaming ramparts, and panic:

> Gusts of splendour, gods and demi-gods contending with vast swords, colour and fragrance broadcast on the field of battle, magnificent victory, magnificent death! Oh, it all burst before the girl, and she even stretched out her gloved hands as if it was tangible. (HE, pp. 46-47)

Helen's reaction to the music is a powerfully imaginative one, and Forster's writing imitates her reaction. The passage takes its power from a marvelous parellelism in the phrasing and a repetition of hard, consonantal sounds, particularly "plosives."[9] There are five parallel sections in the first sentence: a noun and phrase; a compound noun, present participle and phrase; a compound noun, past participle and two phrases; ending with two groups of an adjective and a noun each. By adding elements to each section, Forster gives, through the syntax, an effect of building excitement. In the second part, he adds a verb to the first; in the third part, he adds a phrase to the second, and he ends with

the abrupt repetition of adjective and noun. The continual repetition of "plosives," "g's," "b's," and "d's," gives the passage an intensity of sound which shows Forster's sympathy for Helen. But the sympathy is not without qualification. By using a simple past tense verb instead of the subjunctive mood in "as if it was tangible," Forster warns the reader about Helen's confusion of life and art.

With the Wilcoxes, the narrator remains the observer, the manipulator, the artist; he shows little indication of fallibility. Perhaps because little insight is necessary, the narrator pretends complete omniscience:

> The interlude closes. It has taken place in Charles's garden at Hilton. He and Dolly are sitting in deckchairs, and their motor is regarding them placidly from its garage across the lawn. A short-frocked edition of Charles also regards them placidly; a perambulator edition is squeaking; a third edition is expected shortly. Nature is turning out Wilcoxes in this peaceful abode, so that they may inherit the earth. (HE, p. 187)

Forster uses three different kinds of verbs in the passage for great artistic effect. The first verb, "closes," a present-tense verb, reacts against the verb which follows, the perfect "has taken." The profusion of present continuous verbs, such as "are sitting," "is regarding," "is squeaking," "is expected," clash with the last present tense and auxiliary "may inherit." The effect of the verbs is to create a kind of stasis; the first verb "closes" is an indicator of continuing action, but the perfect tense shows that the action has already taken place. Forster's writing thus imitates the characters, for all of them are curiously immobile. Oddly, the car takes on human characteristics; it "regards them placidly" and the children take on characteristics of the machine; they squeak. Human beings become impersonal, and yet it is an ironic

impersonalism. For Forster equates the children of Charles, the children of the machine age, with "editions," with literature. The passage is highly controlled; an incident out of place or time, the scene loses life, and art takes over. We are issued a warning; this is art testing life and finding it wanting. From the off-handed artlessness of "One may as well begin" to the controlled artistry of "The interlude closes," Forster's syntax beckons and warns of the necessary distinction between life and art.

The distinction becomes more clear with an understanding of Forster's ideas of rhythm.[10] In Aspects of the Novel, Forster describes the technique: "the waxing and waning" which fills us with "surprise and freshness and hope" (AN, p. 115). Wilfred Stone and Peter Burra have commented aptly on the rhythm of the novel:[11]

> To read this novel as Forster would have us read it, we must conceive of it as a kind of musical score in which leitmotifs associated with certain characters and situations are of special importance. And it is the alteration of these leitmotifs, that provides what, essentially, Forster means by "rhythm." The book's rhythms are carried mainly by key phrases, and words within these phrases, which are stated and repeated in ever-widening circles of meaning.[12]

Forster broaches the topic of rhythm not only in Aspects of the Novel, but also in a short essay "Not Listening to Music." The essay discusses Monet, Debussy, and varying reactions to music in much the same way as Howards End does, and, in the same essay, Forster discusses aspects of rhythm:

> The Goldberg Variations, the last Beethoven sonata, the Franck Quartet, the Schumann Piano Quintet and the Fourth Symphonies of Tchaikovsky and of Brahms certainly have a message. Though what on earth is it? I shall get tied up trying to say. There's an insistence in music--expressed largely through

> rhythm; there's a sense that it is trying to push across at us something which is neither an aesthetic pattern nor a sermon. That's what I listen for specially. ("Not Listening to Music," TC, p. 141)

As in the description of rhythm in Aspects of the Novel, this passage shows Forster's belief in life rather than art. He says there is a message in music, and that it is "pushed across" at the listener. But the form of the message must not be too rigid; it is neither "aesthetic pattern," nor "sermon," but something loose, which can be easily assimilated by the listener. Pattern in writing implies, for Forster, a kind of dogmatism, a condescension to the reader. Thus, writing must appear to be loose, inartistic, so that life and message are available, but not forced. Rhythm, by approaching life, lulls the reader into an acceptance of the message.

Appropriately enough, Forster shows the stylistic importance of rhythm in "Not Listening to Music." The phrase "wool-gathering" is repeated three times in the essay. Forster uses it casually at the beginning of the essay to describe his inattention to music: "I wool-gather most of the time" (TC, p. 139). In the middle of the essay, the phrase expands into a full-blown word-play: "To think of a gray-green tapestry is not very different from thinking of the backs of chairs. We gather a superior wool from it, still we do wool-gather" (TC, pp. 140-41). And the phrase contracts again at the end of the essay: "no wool-gathering or thinking myself clever here" (TC, p. 142). The repetition of the phrase at regularly calculated intervals would seem the kind of patterning Forster denies. But the phrase is disarmingly spontaneous and colloquial, giving a sense of life, rather than of art. It is this seemingly loose pattern, which Forster calls rhythm, and it characterizes

both his fictional and his non-fictional writings.

The major rhythmic phrases of Howards End, "panic and emptiness," "telegrams and anger," "the seen and the unseen," "steadily and whole," and "only connect," recur at regularly calculated intervals throughout the book. "Panic and emptiness," "telegrams and anger," and "the seen and the unseen" start early in the novel, and comprise what Forster calls the first symphonic movement. "Only connect," with its variants "the monk and the beast," and "living in fragments," starts much later in the novel, composing the second symphonic movement. The two movements, seemingly disjointed, come together in the last section of the novel, "seeing steadily," "telegrams and anger," and "only connect" occurring within the last fourteen pages of the novel. The rhythms, coming from various sources, from character speech, from narration, from authorial comment give the illusion of spontaneity. They are, however, calculatedly artistic, and serve to reinforce Forster's dual perspective of art and life.

The recurrence of phrases like "only connect" begins an intimate correspondence between the several features of the book, between character and narrator, between character and character, and between narrator and narrator. The phrase, seemingly spontaneous, is both highly calculated and ironic at once. The "only connect" phrase is a superlative example of the technique:

> Margaret greeted her lord with peculiar tenderness on the morrow. Mature as he was, she might yet be able to help him to the building of the rainbow bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion. Without it we are meaningless fragments, half monks, half beasts, unconnected arches that have never joined into a man. With it love is born, and alights on the highest curve, glowing against the gray, sober against the fire. Happy the man who sees from either aspect

> the glory of those outspread wings. The roads of his soul lie clear, and he and his friends shall find easy going.
>
> It was hard going in the roads of Mr. Wilcox's soul.
>
> (HE, p. 187)

The passage, Margaret's perspective filtered through the narrator's consciousness, is a highly ironic one. Archaic words "lord," "morrow," and "alight" affirm the inflated tone of the paragraph and syntactic reversals, "Happy the man," reinforce the formality of the extended metaphor. Personified love, alighting on the curves of this connecting rainbow bridge, is a stiffly formal emblem, which betrays the speaker's state of mind. It is only at the end of the paragraph that a colloquialism, undermining the high seriousness, is introduced. "Easy going," usually used as an adjective, as in an easy-going man, is here used as a noun. The colloquial, versatile nature of the word is made apparent by the contrast in the following sentence where the antonym "hard going" is used. Because of the versatility of the word, the sentence can be read in two ways with "hard" functioning as an adjective complement to "it" and "going" acting as a present participle, or with "hard" acting as an adjective for the gerundial noun complement "going." In its looseness and colloquialism, the sentence acts as a simple ironic reply to the complex, metaphorical writing of the previous passage. With the statement, Forster deals a blow at the romantic pretense of language. The blow gains force a paragraph later.

The second "only connect" speech comes to us directly from Margaret's consciousness, and provides a concerted critical statement on the expression of the first:

> It did not seem so difficult. She need trouble him with no gift of her own. She would only point out the salvation that was latent in his own soul, and in the soul of every man.

> Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its highest. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die. (HE, p. 188)

The inflated metaphoric quality of the first speech here disappears. By employing abrupt, imperative sentences, and repetition of the important phrase, "only connect," Forster gives Margaret's speech an additional "punch" and effectiveness that was missing in the first. Interestingly, Forster gives Margaret's speech the qualities of a sermon, the thing which Forster detests in writing. Her sermon is, however, something with which he can agree. Margaret does not see herself as superior, but asks Henry to look inside his own soul for salvation. And her speech is as simply phrased as the narrator's is complicated. The introduction "It did not seem so difficult," is thus ironic. For Margaret, the "roads" of Henry's soul are not as difficult as for the narrator. And, ironically, it is Margaret's phrase, the simply stated "Only connect," which becomes the keynote of the novel.

Just as Margaret replies to the narrator, so do characters reply to characters in Howards End. Early in the novel, we are made aware, through narrative comment, of Margaret's attitudes towards railway terminals. To her, they are suggestive of infinity, "gates to the glorious and the unknown" (HE, p. 27). The narrator is apologetic about Margaret's ideas, at this point, adopting a protective stance towards her. It is only the narrator, the reader, and Margaret herself who can know the thought, for the subject is never broached in a dialogue. But, only a few paragraphs later, Mrs. Munt answers Margaret: "At times the Great North Road accompanied her, more suggestive of infinity than any

railway" (HE, p. 29). The word "any" is the key to Mrs. Munt's mystic discovery of Margaret's thought; her scorn at Margaret's silliness is apparent. In a similar way, Margaret answers Helen on the idea of death. Margaret thus knows intuitively of a conversation which she has never heard, the conversation between Leonard and Helen:

> But Margaret saw Death stripped of any false romance; whatever the idea of Death may contain, the process can be trivial and hideous. (HE, p. 271)

Forster's narrator is clearly playing tricks on the reader. By allocating portions of his omniscience to the characters, the narrator provides a spontaneous connection between them on an ideological level, which is nevertheless deliberately planned and artful. But Forster does not stop with the interaction between characters and narrator. Humorously, the narrator even replies to himself.

After the original altercation between Henry and Margaret over Mrs. Bast, the narrator makes the following comment:

> As is Man to the Universe, so was the mind of Mr. Wilcox to the minds of some men--a concentrated light upon a tiny spot, a little Ten Minutes moving self-contained through its appointed years. No pagan he, who lives for the Now, and may be wiser than all philosophers. He lived for the five minutes that have passed, and the five to come; he had the business mind. (HE, p. 245)

Mr. Wilcox's mind is a mind which moves forward and backward incessantly, but cannot concern itself with the present. Because it can only enjoy the "now," his is a mind which is never satisfied. Something bigger lurks in the passage; the man, who concentrates on the now, though he is a pagan, may have superior wisdom. The thought that the narrator expresses is qualified by the future conditional verb "may be." Only near the end of the book is the tentativeness dispelled:

> The peace of the country was entering into her. It has no commerce with memory, and little with hope. Least of all is it concerned with the hopes of the next five minutes. It is the peace of the present, which passes understanding. Its murmur came 'now', and 'now' once more as they trod the gravel, and 'now' as the moonlight fell upon their father's sword. (HE, p. 307)

The phrases of the original passage reappear in a marvelous finale. The word "commerce" reminds us of Henry, but now it is the pagan mind which triumphs. The narrator, in effect, answers himself. The answer, couched in short assertive sentences, is more convincing than the first statement: "It is the peace of the present, which passes understanding." Typically Forsterian, however, the assertion is softened in the final sentence. The repetition of "now" is lulling and rhythmic, and it tempers the assertions of the previous passage. Forster's artistry is readily apparent, the interconnection of themes and phrases creating a subtle unity in the novel. The unity is never forced, however; the pattern is always softened; we are transported by the beauty of the closing sentence and of Forster's style.

Forster's style, at once colloquial and spontaneous, formal and artistic, is the key to his perception of art and life. Virginia Woolf's criticism that "just as we are yielding ourselves to the pleasures of the imagination, a little jerk rouses us. We are tapped on the shoulder. We are to notice this, to take heed of that,"[13] is thus a particularly apt one. For although Forster gives the reader a sense of life, he consistently reminds us of the fiction. The technique is what caused Lionel Trilling to remark: "His prose with its notable happiness of expression is not merely an atmosphere of his novels--it is, indeed, one of the characters."[14]

CHAPTER III

IMAGERY

Forster introduces a series of thematic oppositions in Howards End, oppositions between science and art, between commerce and personal relations, between the game and life. Lionel Trilling cites Howards End as the center of the conflict; the house represents England, and the novel concerns itself with England's fate.[1] However apt Trilling's comment, its effect has been to initiate a dialogue over the exact meaning of the house. Frederick Crews sees it as a symbol of "integrated family life,"[2] and George Thomson comments that the house is a symbol of the "continuity between past and future generations."[3] The critical concern over the house has largely obscured Forster's major purpose in Howards End. Alice R. Bensen comes closer to the point when she says: "In Howards End Forster's concern for 'personal relations' is organized into a critique by means of the procedures of dialectic."[4] Bensen locates the major issue of any discussion concerning the novel, and that is "dialectic." While Forster introduces a series of oppositions in theme in Howards End, he synthesizes those oppositions in the realm of imagery.

Typical of this is the thematic opposition between the city and the country in Howards End. Forster's regard is, ostensibly, for the country, for Mrs. Wilcox, for the farm laborers: "In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole" (HE, p. 264). London, on the other hand, is a kind of monster; constantly in flux, it threatens to destroy those things which Forster admires, the individual, tradition, stability. But, however strong his dislike, Forster realizes

that he cannot ignore London, and that it is a fact with which he must reckon:

> Of Pan and the elemental forces the public has heard a little too much--they seem Victorian, while London is Georgian--and those who care for the earth with sincerity may wait long ere the pendulum swings back to her again. Certainly London fascinates. One visualizes it as a tract of quivering gray, intelligent without purpose, and excitable without love; as a spirit that has altered before it can be chronicled; as a heart that certainly beats, but with no pulsation of humanity. . . . But who can explain Westminster Bridge Road or Liverpool Street in the morning--the city inhaling--or the same thoroughfares in the evening--the city exhaling her exhausted air? (HE, p. 116)

The narrator is typically derogatory about London in the passage. The city has no humanity; it is a mere "tract" of gray which possesses intelligence and excitement, but lacks purpose and love. Ironically, however, the narrator uses human terms to describe the city; it has spirit and heart, and performs necessary human functions, inhaling and exhaling. Forster recognizes that his love for the country is, perhaps, old-fashioned. That the narrator uses the archaism "ere" to anticipate a return to Victorian ideas, marks Forster's thoughtful attitude to the opposite pole of thought. And the image of the pendulum confirms Forster's thoughtfulness. Swinging from side to side, the pendulum symbolizes not only the historical flux of ideas, but it also subtly unites the town and the country. Though they may be at war, the two poles of thought are indispensable to one another. The passage, though a serious debate over the city and the country, is not without humor. The narrator puns on the words "exhausted air," allowing the reader to determine the meaning as one of fatigue or as one of waste. It is this kind of dialectic, the poles and the synthesis, which characterizes Forster's style in Howards End. Though a bias is always evident in any of Forster's arguments, it is

a bias tempered by knowledge of the other side.

Forster introduces the first thematic opposition in Howards End by way of Mr. Schlegel. Margaret's father is originally somewhat of an ambiguous figure; he has taken up arms in Germany's imperialistic war against Austria and Denmark, and participated in what Forster ironically calls Germany's "Forward Policy." After the war, however, Margaret's father loses something; a "hint of the truth" (HE, p. 42) breaks on him, and he naturalizes himself in England. His objections to the war are twofold. By annexing land, Germany becomes materialistic, but, more importantly, the war creates a love of science and of facts, which dwarfs the inner personality:

> Your poets too are dying, your philosophers, your musicians, to whom Europe has listened for two hundred years. Gone. Gone with the little courts that nurtured them--gone with Esterhaz and Weimar. What? What's that? Your universities? Oh yes, you have learned men, who collect more facts than do the learned men of England. They collect facts, and facts, and empires of facts. But which of them will rekindle the light within? (HE, p. 43)

Mr. Schlegel's concern is for the death of art and the expansion of science, the growth of the outer world and the subsequent diminution of the inner world. His vocabulary is interesting, for he equates art with "little courts," with something small, insular, aristocratic. The world of facts and of science, on the other hand, is compared to "empire," to expansion, to imperialism and to the outer world. Forster proposes a similar concern for the expansion and growth of science in almost all his post-war essays:

> Science will wipe us clean constantly, they hope, and at decreasing intervals. Broadcasting and the cinema have wiped out the drama, and quite soon we may hope for some new invention which will wipe out the cinema industry and

> Broadcasting House. In this constant scrubbing, what place can there be for the Brandenburg Concertos, or for solitary readings of Dante. . . . ("Does Culture Matter?" TC, p. 114)

As in Mr. Schlegel's speech, Forster's concern here is for the unheeding expansion of science into the public domain. "Bigness," imperialism, are the goals of science, and, in its constant demand for change, science slowly destroys the "solitary," inner life of the spirit.

In Howards End, it is Henry who represents most fully the life of science. Helen's summary of him is a particularly apt one:

> 'But he must be one of those men who have reconciled science with religion,' said Helen slowly. 'I don't like those men. They are scientific themselves, and talk of the survival of the fittest, and cut down the salaries of their clerks, and stunt the independence of all who may menace their comfort, but yet they believe that somehow good--it is always that sloppy "somehow"--will be the outcome. . . .' (HE, p. 193)

But Helen both identifies and falls prey to Henry's scientific ethics. When she returns from Europe, Henry takes command of her capture, and hires Mansbridge to accompany him. Mansbridge is a typically objective doctor, asking questions about Helen in a matter-of-fact tone which denies any feeling: "Was she normal? Was there anything congenital or hereditary? Had anything occurred that was likely to alienate her from her family?" (HE, p. 282). Margaret, who sees the capture as "the ethics of the wolf-pack" (HE, p. 277), and who views the car as a "beast of prey" (HE, p. 282), replies inwardly to Mansbridge in a tone of shocked outrage:

> How dare these men label her sister! What horrors lay ahead! What impertinences that shelter under the name of science! The pack was turning on Helen, to deny her human rights, and it seemed to Margaret that all Schlegels were threatened with her. Were they normal? What a question to ask! (HE, p. 282)

Margaret's opinion of science is made clear by her equation of the car

with the beast in the first quotation, the scientific man with the pack in the second. By denying human rights, science reverts to the level of the beast, destroying individual dignity. And it is not only Helen who is threatened, but all Schlegels, all those who participate in an artistic world.

Science does exist, however; Forster cannot deny the inevitable. By associating with the Wilcoxes, the Schlegels must necessarily be influenced, and Forster shows the influence by playing on the importance of facts in the scientific world. Henry, typically, admires the life of facts as a protection from emotion:

> But Henry had no intention of telling. Perhaps he could not have told, for his mental states became obscure as soon as he had passed through them. He misliked the very word 'interesting', connoting it with wasted energy and even with morbidity. Hard facts were enough for him. (HE, p. 180)

Because Henry's inner life is confused, he prefers the life of facts, but Forster shows, ironically, that the Schlegels are not far removed. When Margaret worries over Helen's strangeness, Tibby, the admirer of experts, advises her to consult Henry. During the consultation, Tibby speaks in Henry's language:

> 'The facts are as follows,' replied Tibby, who had at times a pedantic lucidity. 'The facts are that she has been in England for three days and will not see us. She has forbidden the bankers to give us her address. She refuses to answer questions. Margaret finds her letters colourless. There are other facts, but these are the most striking.' (HE, p. 276)

The repetition of the word "facts" three times in Tibby's speech brings him exceedingly close to Henry's world. But the repetition also becomes highly humorous, for every time the word "facts" is repeated, little information follows, and the speech, intended by Tibby to be straightforward

and exact, becomes, instead, repetitive and empty. The words "pedantic lucidity" thus become highly ironic ones, for Tibby is most obscure at precisely the time he is most pedantic. Forster not only laughs at the pedantry of the factual world, but also shows the Schlegels mimicking the mentality they dislike. The world of science and the world of art, originally opposed, here merge.

Forster uses a similar technique in the meeting between Mrs. Munt and Charles, ostensibly a meeting of the artistic and the scientific worlds. Mrs. Munt wishes to speak of the "personal relations" between her niece and Paul, but Charles, clearly unconcerned, is engaged in "tooling" his father "to catch the down train" (HE, p. 31), and in picking up supplies for the house. The supplies, fittingly, are of a mechanical, metallic nature, a "metal funnel," a "saucepan," and a "garden squirt" (HE, p. 34). Charles, the scientific man, becomes totally identified with his car:

> Young Wilcox was pouring in petrol, starting his engine, and performing other actions with which this story has no concern. The great car began to rock, and the form of Mrs. Munt, trying to explain things, sprang agreeably up and down among the red cushions. (HE, p. 31)

Young Wilcox performs two actions associated with the motor-car, but Forster is deliberately ambiguous about the actions. A prepositional phrase missing in the first item, and an ambiguous pronoun in the second item lead the reader to ask two questions. Into what is Charles pouring petrol, and whose engine is he starting? The answers are clear. Charles becomes synonymous with his car, and Mrs. Munt, ostensibly the protector of art, enters into the world of science. She becomes a mere "form," which tries to explain things, and, Forster shows, from his ironic

perspective, that she is agreeable to the change; she springs "agreeably up and down among the red cushions." Through the Wilcoxes, Forster acknowledges the presence of science in his world, but he is suitably dismissive, for the actions which Charles performs are those with which "the story has no concern."

But the last phrase is typically ironic; Forster is concerned about science, and scientific images pervade even the most artistic passages:

> Our impulse to sneer, to forget, is at root a good one. We recognize that emotion is not enough, and that men and women are personalities capable of sustained relations, not mere opportunities for an electrical discharge. Yet we rate the impulse too highly. We do not admit that by collisions of this trivial sort the doors of heaven may be shaken open. (HE, p. 39)

Forster here introduces an opposition between spontaneous love and sustained love, and the narrator pushes the reader to see the value of spontaneity. The narrator is suitably objective in the passage, calling men and women "personalities," or "opportunities." Though he realizes the value of enduring relationships, the narrator supports spontaneous emotions, and he describes those emotions in terms of scientific imagery. Helen's feeling for Paul is an "electrical discharge," "a collision," and it is these scientific actions which produce an appealing result; with them, "the doors of heaven may be shaken open." The pendulum swings between science and art, touching one, then the other, and, all the time, subtly uniting the two.

Forster introduces a second polarity in his writings between the world of commerce and the world of personal relations. In many of his post-war essays, the problem of commercialism is a major one:

> On the subject of money, van Gogh becomes comprehensible and sound. He has got round money because he has sought suffering and renounced happiness. In the sizzle surrounding him, his voice says uncommercial, unscientific, pure. He sees the colour 'blue', observes that the colour 'yellow' always occurs in it, and writes this preposterous postulate up upon the white walls. He has a home beyond comfort and common sense with the saints, and perhaps he sees God. ("The Last Parade," TC, p. 23)

As in the pendulum passage, Forster here introduces the poles of van Gogh's existence, a clear opposition between materialism and art. On the thematic level, Forster shows that van Gogh's mind is both uncommercial and unscientific, and that these traits lead to purity of intellect. But Forster ironically introduces an impure color imagery which affects van Gogh's purity of mind; yellow always occurs in blue. Ironically, it is the impure world of science and commerce, "the sizzle," which provides the inspiration for van Gogh's art, and it is his recognition of impurity which gives him "common sense with the saints." In effect, van Gogh's art is to translate impurity into purity by writing the "preposterous postulate up upon the white walls." Though he is isolated from the impure world, van Gogh is necessarily a part of it, and, inevitably, the world affects his art. It is this kind of complex dialectic which characterizes not only the imagery of the essays, but also the imagery of Howards End.

Forster uses Henry in the novel as the man who prizes commerce above personal relations. Described consistently in terms of commercial imagery, Henry "installs" himself at Oniton (HE, p. 218), and "retails" stories to Dolly (HE, p. 202). Typically, Henry objectifies the life of personal relations by assuming the language and mentality of the businessman. After finding Ruth's note bequeathing Howards End to Margaret, his wife's death becomes easier for him:

> That note, scribbled in pencil, sent through the matron, was unbusinesslike as well as cruel, and decreased at once the value of the woman who had written it. (HE, p. 108)

Personal relations and commerce seem very close in Henry's world. The note is "unbusiness-like as well as cruel," and both features "at once" lower Ruth in Henry's mind. But it is the business life which clearly overrides the personal, for Henry's disenchantment is described in terms of commerce; Ruth becomes merely an unsuccessful venture; her "value" decreases. And it is this commercial imagery, which dominates Henry's personal relations. After the exposure of his infidelity to Ruth and his subsequent forgiveness by Margaret, Henry makes a "clean breast," and sends his failure "the way of other unsuccessful investments" (HE, p. 244).

The Schlegels, supposedly the supporters of personal relations, should be far removed from Henry's commercialism. But Forster assigns to the Schlegels, commercial metaphors, and shows them coming very close to Henry's world.[5] Margaret's father, for instance, describes personal relations in terms of commerce: "You remember 'rent'? It was one of father's words--rent to the ideal, to his own faith in human nature" (HE, p. 55). The commercial image Mr. Schlegel uses subtly unites the world of finance and the world of personal relations, and yet, in his speech, money is sacrificed for the personal. Margaret, however, goes one step further. She comments that "the very soul of the world is economic, and that the lowest abyss is not the absence of love, but the absence of coin" (HE, p. 72). In the statement, Margaret equates very closely the world of the spirit with the world of commerce, for she realizes that money creates security, leisure, and the ability to expand personally. And it is this position at which Leonard finally arrives:

"'Miss. Schlegel, the real thing's money, and all the rest is a dream'" (HE, p. 236). In terms of commercial imagery, Forster draws the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes together.

A similar dialectical technique occurs in the game imagery of Howards End. Originally, it seems that the Wilcoxes are the lovers of the game; they play croquet, and tennis, and golf. The game provides, for them, an artificial structuring to a chaotic world; often, then, when emotion intrudes, the structuring of the game falls. Typical of this is Evie, who is playing in a tennis tournament when she hears of her father's engagement and her play goes "simply to pot" (HE, p. 206). Margaret realizes that the game obscures personal relations; it breeds order, but it is an order without thought or emotion:

> People lost their humanity, and took values as arbitrary as those in a pack of playing-cards. . . . In this jangle of causes and effects what had become of their true selves? Here Leonard lay dead in the garden, from natural causes; yet life was a deep, deep river, death a blue sky, life was a wisp of hay, a flower, a tower, life and death were anything and everything, except this ordered insanity, where the king takes the queen, and the ace the king. (HE, p. 320)

Margaret criticizes Henry for his participation in the "ordered insanity." His economic theorizing is originally too facile for her; he sacrifices humanity for the instincts of the winner. In a conversation over the inevitability of there being rich and poor in the world, and in reply to Henry's conception of socialism, Margaret says: "I strongly suspect yours of being not socialists, but ninepins, which you have constructed for your own amusement. I can't imagine any living creature who would bowl over quite so easily" (HE, p. 160). Margaret's criticism of Henry is that he conceives of people as objects, as pieces of the game, which he can knock down, or set up, at will. Ironically, however, Margaret is a "bowler" in

the same game.

Wishing to help Leonard, after informing him of the unsoundness of the Porphyrion, Margaret invites him again to tea. Leonard, however, is somewhat suspicious, thinking that Margaret is "picking his brains" for "official information" (HE, p. 147). Margaret flies into a rage, telling Leonard that he has imagination and singularity; he has walked by the Pole Star. Margaret's speech seems an altruistic one, but Forster is hesitant to agree, for, in his opinion, "doing good to humanity" is "useless" (HE, p. 134). Evie's remark to Margaret, after her altercation with Leonard, is thus particularly apt: "'Bowling him over with those long sentences was what fetched me,' cried Evie" (HE, p. 149). Through Evie's speech, Forster connects Margaret with the same bowling image she originally applied to Henry. The association is confirmed later, when Margaret wishes Tibby and Helen to decide on the matter of the house, and she is anxious to "pin" them both (HE, p. 162). Like the puns discussed in the first chapter, these are words which reverberate outward, creating subtle nuances of meaning. For "pin" can mean literally "pinning down," but figuratively, and more importantly, the word shows Margaret's inevitable participation in the game. Like Henry, she too, may conceive of people as objects, which can be manipulated at will.

Through the first three major images in the novel, images of science, of commerce, and of games, Forster subtly brings Margaret and Henry together. But there is one point at which the two characters diverge, and this is over the matter of houses. Henry conceives of his property as mere investment, as a successful or an unsuccessful transaction. Margaret, on the other hand, invests houses with personality, and conceives of them as living things. It is here that the dialectics between science

and art, between commerce and personal relations, disappear for a moment, and the opposition becomes a full-scale war. For Forster, the opposition is difficult to reconcile; in his essays, particularly, he comes out against the commercial view of architecture:

> Which is all very well, but when I hear such talk, and see the architects sharpening their pencils and the contractors getting out their estimates, and the statesmen marking out their spheres of influence, and everyone getting down to the job, a very famous text occurs to me: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.' ("Tolerance," TC, p. 59)

The architect, sharpening his pencil, almost as a weapon of destruction, is, here, irrevocably connected to the world of commerce. Forster sees the need for humanity in architecture, and in Howards End, the characters take sides on the matter. Margaret sees the London environment as one of constant flux; people are depersonalized, equated with the coldness of architecture: "In the streets of the city she noted for the first time the architecture of hurry, and heard the language of hurry on the mouths of its inhabitants--clipped words, formless sentences, potted expressions of approval or disgust" (HE, p. 116). The statement introduces an opposition between characters in Howards End. Are they to judge buildings as only "bricks and mortar" or is there something which they have missed and must regain?

Mrs. Wilcox sets the standard for the artistic view of architecture. To her, Howards End is alive, possessing the spirit of the past and the hope of the future. Instinctively, she realizes Margaret's potential for houses and bequeathes Howards End to her. Margaret does have potential. She invests the clock of King's Cross with an imaginary quality, seeing it as a "second moon in that infernal sky" (HE, p. 95),

and, as noted previously, she has strong feelings about the various railway terminals:

> Those two great arches, colourless, indifferent, shouldering between them an unlovely clock, were fit portals for some eternal adventure, whose issue might be prosperous, but would certainly not be expressed in the ordinary language of prosperity. (HE, p. 27)

The narrator's defense of Margaret in the passage is originally a rather ironic one. It is lifeless architecture, "colourless," and "indifferent" about which she has deep feelings. But Forster gives the arches a sense of life; that they "shoulder" a clock makes Margaret's feeling viable. Her response to the architecture leads to an adventure, but it is an adventure that is decidedly uncommercial, a prosperity of the spirit rather than a prosperity of the purse.

Margaret's humanized vision of architecture is opposed to that of Henry, who conceives of houses as mere property. Typical of this is his house in Oniton, which, despite the ruined castle on its grounds, has no aesthetic appeal for Henry: "The place turned out to be in the wrong part of Shropshire, damn it, and, though he never damned his own property aloud, he was only waiting to get it off his hands, and then to let fly" (HE, p. 208). Forster clarifies the opposition between Margaret and Henry when Margaret comments that houses are alive. And Henry is suitably "out of his depth" (HE, p. 159). The conflict is exacerbated when Margaret catches a glimpse of Henry's house in Ducie Street. The house lives in Margaret's mind, but it has a queer, heavy kind of life:

> After so much self-colour and self-denial, Margaret viewed with relief the sumptuous dado, the frieze, the gilded wallpaper, amid whose foliage parrots sang. It would never do with her own furniture, but those heavy chairs, that immense sideboard loaded with presentation plate, stood up against the pressure

> like men. The room suggested men, and Margaret, keen to derive the modern capitalist spirit from the warriors and hunters of the past, saw it as an ancient guest-hall, where the lord sat at meat among his thanes. Even the Bible--the Dutch Bible that Charles had brought back from the Boer War--fell into position. Such a room admitted loot. (HE, p. 167)

A strange tension between life and non-life exists in the passage. Margaret sees, in the room, a connection with the past, with "warriors," and "hunters," and "thanes," a connection which, in Forster's view, represents life. But the room also suggests modern capitalism; heavy, "loaded" with material goods, the room is dominated by the spirit of money and imperialism. Forster shows his distaste for the Wilcox imperialism by his ironic introduction of the Bible into the last sentence of the passage. The Bible, traditionally associated with peace and goodwill, has been retrieved, by Charles, from the Boer War. Like everything else in the room, the Bible is a kind of collector's item, the "loot," the booty of war. It loses the values of the spirit, and becomes a mere possession, an ironic symbol of the Wilcox imperialism. In this room, the inner life dies, and the outer life triumphs.

Henry's failure to see houses as anything but a confirmation of his own wealth, turns humorously in upon himself. Forster describes him in terms of the architectural, outer life, which characterizes him:

> The forehead, too, was like Charles's. High and straight, brown and polished, merging abruptly into temples and skull, it had the effect of a bastion that protected his head from the world. At times it had the effect of a blank wall. (HE. p. 100)

Henry's head is like well-polished furniture, and it has the effect of a "bastion." It is this metaphor which Helen refers to when she sees the Wilcox family as "just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars, and golf-clubs" (HE, p. 40), behind which lies "panic and emptiness." And it is the

element of hiding or blocking which Margaret refers to later when "the forehead of the hill rose up and hid the whole scene" (HE, p. 246). Henry hides behind this wall to protect himself from emotion. It is only near the end of the book that his "fortress" gives way, and Margaret takes him to "recruit" at Howards End. The description of Henry's forehead as a bastion not only reinforces the architectural images which pervade the novel, but also subtly portends the images of force, which inevitably affect all the characters. The war in Howards End is a war fought to protect the individual, either artistic or scientific, from the ravages of the opposite side.

At first glance, it seems that the Wilcoxes, aggressive and imperialistic, are the agents of force in the novel. They live the lives of "telegrams and anger" (HE, p. 115), and they "prepare the way for cosmopolitanism" (HE, p. 315). An explosion is always imminent in any meeting between Schlegels and Wilcoxes:

> They led a life that she could not attain to--the outer life of 'telegrams and anger', which had detonated when Helen and Paul had touched in June, and had detonated again the other week. To Margaret this life was to remain a real force. (HE, p. 112)

Forster is deliberately contradictory in the passage. Margaret cannot attain to the outer life of anger, and yet it remains to her a real "force." A concentrated irony centres on the last word in the passage; in the context, "force" means importance or centrality, but it also subtly heralds Margaret's participation in the battle, for she too must participate. It is Henry's dictum that the "battle of life" is inescapable (HE, p. 192), and although Helen considers it an infelicitous phrase, no characters are exempt.

Forster includes Leonard and Jackie in the domain of force. Jacky has the "jaws" of a fighting animal, and her eyes are "anxious and hungry" (HE, p. 61). Leonard, who aspires to the life of Culture, a life which is beyond Jacky, is thus constantly keeping parts of his life from her. Margaret's visiting-card becomes a major source of contention; it is the ground where the two do battle: "A few inches of pasteboard, it became the battlefield on which the souls of Leonard and his wife contended" (HE, p. 130). Mrs. Munt also joins the battle. On her journey to Howards End with Charles and in conversation with Tibby, Aunt Juley variously "opens fire" (HE, p. 32), "blazes out" (HE, p. 34), and fires a "shot" which "fails" (HE, p. 51). Forster even describes the landscape around Howards End in terms of force:

> Down by the dell-hole more vivid colours were awakening, and Lent lilies stood sentinel on its margin, or advanced in battalions over the grass. (HE, p. 200)

The passage describing the landscape around Howards End is central to the interpretation of force in the novel, for Forster conceives of color imagery and the country locale as indicators of individuality. Here, with both color and the country represented, Forster introduces the concept of force; the flowers are "sentinels" or "battalions." The battle in Howards End is not totally, as Trilling suggests, a "class war,"[6] or a "war between men and women,"[7] but also, and more appropriately, it is a war waged to protect individual differences, individual color.

The major contenders in the battle are the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels. Though the tension is clear between Helen and Henry from the start, it becomes exacerbated after Helen's return to England. Helen thinks, while she stays in Howards End, that Henry must be beginning the

"siege," and Margaret, anxious to have one last night with Helen, decides to plead her cause. Forster describes the ensuing interview between Margaret and Henry in terms of a battle: "her first blow missed" (HE, p. 297), "she hit out for the first time" (HE, p. 297), and "he shot an unexpected bolt" (HE, p. 299). The irony of the first passage "To Margaret, this life was to remain a real force," is here made clear. For as a member of the artistic world, Margaret must inevitably face the "force" of the scientific world.

Forster understands that the battle is destructive and that the cessation of force results in creativity: "While the gods are powerful, we learn little about them. It is only in the days of their decadence that a strong light beats into heaven" (HE, p. 145). But he also realizes that force is inevitable, and that, ironically, force is the only way to ensure the survival of the individual:

> So that is what I feel about force and violence. It is, alas! the ultimate reality on this earth, but it does not always get to the front. Some people call its absences 'decadence'; I call them 'civilization'. . . . And yet we need not despair, indeed, we cannot despair; the evidence of history shows us that men have always insisted on behaving creatively under the shadow of the sword; that they have done their artistic and scientific and domestic stuff for the sake of doing it, and that we had better follow their example under the shadow of the aeroplanes. ("What I Believe," TC, p. 85)

As shown by Howards End, force is the ultimate reality. For a great levelling process is at work. London conspires to make everything the same; science wages a battle against art, commerce against personal relations. In Forster's terminology, the individual can only survive by a fight. Two images in Howards End show the necessity of force in Forster's world; one suggests the destruction, the other, the survival of the individual.

In Howards End, it is the sea which conspires to destroy the individual. London, described as a "tide that could never be quiet" (HE, p. 57), is a monster, which threatens to destroy the individual. Leonard is one of the victims of London life; possessing little money and little hope, he is clearly below the surface of the sea. Even Margaret, in a moment of vindictiveness, refers to Leonard and his wife as a "sea-green and salmon bunch of people" (HE, p. 277). Leonard's aspiration is to gain individuality through culture; his hope is that keeping on with Ruskin, and the Queen's Hall, and Watts, he may "one day push his head out of the gray waters and see the universe" (HE, p. 62). Leonard's submersion under the water, his loss of individuality, is primarily due to lack of money. Margaret, on the other hand, is relatively secure. An inheritance guarantees her safety from the sea and from the loss of individuality: "But Helen and I, we ought to remember, when we are tempted to criticize others, that we are standing on these islands, and that most of the others are down below the surface of the sea" (HE, p. 72). Margaret's position is a rather fortuitous one, for, unlike Leonard, she has never suffered or struggled, and it is perhaps only chance which separates her from the sea.

Like Margaret, Mrs. Wilcox also realizes her separation from the masses, but, more importantly, she understands the influence of chance. When Margaret comments that Ruth dies as the "seafarer who can greet with an equal eye the deep that he is entering, and the shore that he must leave" (HE, p. 111), she is subtly praising her bravery. For Margaret and for the rest of the economically stable, the shore represents financial security, a distance from the masses. The sea, on the other hand, represents economic depression, re-entry into the tonelessness of a

financially insecure state. For Margaret, the re-entry is a frightening prospect, similar to the "odours from the abyss," which arise whenever she is faced with the knowledge of poverty. That Ruth views the sea calmly is thus a wonderful attribute, an acknowledgement of her own equality with the people under the sea. Margaret's fear is an occasion for some laughter; her sanctuary is described as follows:

> Their house was in Wickham Place. . . . One had the sense of a backwater, or rather of an estuary, whose waters flowed in from the invisible sea, and ebbed into a profound silence while the waves without were still beating. (HE, p. 23)

Wickham Place is protected from the masses, from the waves which beat outside. But it is difficult to say how praiseworthy the protection is, for the narrator slips slightly in his commentary, calling the house a "backwater," and then quickly rectifying the mistake "or rather of an estuary." By catching his mistake, the narrator foregrounds the original word, "backwater," clearly the word which he wishes us to grasp. Margaret's isolation is thus a rather cowardly thing, which results in a stagnant attitude of mind, an ignorance of those people below the sea. The last image is also indicative of the diversity of Forster's liberal attitudes. He sees the need for the protection of the individual, and yet he cannot forget the masses; it is a difficult problem for Forster, and one, which could scarcely be resolved without contradiction.

It is only through the last image of the novel that Forster shows his preference for the individual. The contrast between "grayness" and color in the novel is a striking one. "Grayness" is consistently associated with London and modernism, color with the country and the past. London is a "clot of gray," a "tract of quivering gray," while Oniton is bright, colorful: "Down by the dell-hole more vivid colors were awakening"

(HE, p. 200). Modernism, the attempt at equality, is wrong, resulting in grayness (HE, p. 134), while the past is more correct, described in terms of bright colors (HE, p. 58). Forster shows the need for individual survival through colors in the novel; modernism and the city conspire to equalize, while the country and the past promote differences. And though the dialectic is ensured, though Margaret necessarily influences Henry, and Henry, Margaret, the battle that occurs in Howards End is a battle to retain individuality. It is Margaret who eventually voices the solution:

> It is part of the battle against sameness. Differences--eternal differences, planted by God in a single family, so that there may always be colour; sorrow perhaps, but colour in the daily gray. (HE, p. 328)

Forster's liberalism, a yearning to provide for the masses and the individual at once, is a clearly contradictory philosophy. It is certain that if Margaret's kind of financial security creates individuality, then not all people can be individuals. But Forster believed, primarily, in a spiritual, rather than a commercial ascendance, "an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky" ("What I Believe," TC, p. 87), and it was his belief, that anyone willing to "play for his side" could aspire to the aristocratic:

> I have no mystic faith in the people. I have in the individual. He seems to me a divine achievement and I mistrust any view which belittles him. If anyone calls you a wretched little individual--and I've been called that--don't you take it lying down. You are important because everyone else is an individual too--including the person who criticizes you. In asserting your personality you are playing for your side. ("The Challenge of Our Time," TC, p. 72)

Individuals do take sides in Howards End. Margaret, marked primarily by an artistic personality, Henry by a scientific, engage in a battle, which is somewhat destructive, but equally necessary. Interestingly,

however, the characters are not pure. Margaret possesses many of Henry's characteristics, Henry many of Margaret's. Though they retain their individuality, they are yet influenced by the other side. The pendulum swings again.

Lionel Trilling's statement that Howards End represents the fate of England is absolutely correct. The perceptive critic, however, must go beyond the house to the dialectics operating within, dialectics between science and art, between commerce and personal relations. The battle in Howards End is unresolved; characters have stuck to their sides, and, despite connections between them, they have retained their individuality.

CHAPTER IV

IRONY

One of the prominent features of Forster's style is irony, and though critics acknowledge the fact, they yet tend to neglect it. Typical of this are discussions of the "Only connect" epigraph in Howards End. Frederick Crews states that Margaret's connection with the Wilcoxes is "merely diagrammatic";[1] Alan Wilde sees the connections at the close of the novel as a "series of fortuitous circumstances," which show Forster "intent . . . on forcing the fusion of disparate things and people."[2] And Wilfred Stone remarks that Forster will find difficulty being an "impartial mediator between Red-bloods and Mollycoddles."[3] What critics have failed to see is Forster's stylistic subtlety. While he holds characters apart on a thematic level, he is yet making constant ironic connections on a stylistic level. And though the technique is intensified in Howards End, it is yet a major feature of the other novels.

In The Longest Journey, for example, Forster introduces a number of seemingly disparate characters. Ansell, as a student at Cambridge, represents the inner, spiritual and intellectual world, his whole purpose in life being to confirm or deny the existence of objects. Stephen, on the other hand, has grown up in Wiltshire; his accent more uncouth and his reasoning less abstract than Ansell's, he represents the outer life of the body. Rickie, originally a friend of Ansell's and a part of the intellectual life at Cambridge, is drawn out of this orbit by Agnes, and it is Agnes who keeps him from any subsequent contact with Ansell or Stephen. On a thematic level, Forster emphasizes Rickie's separation from

both Stephen and Ansell, but while holding the characters apart thematically, Forster makes constant stylistic connections between them.

Forster uses two kinds of symbols, both objects and words, as stylistic connecting devices in The Longest Journey. The dominant object/symbol of the novel is the Cadbury Rings, which has a definite geometrical formation:

> A bank of grass enclosed a ring of turnips, which enclosed a second bank of grass, which enclosed more turnips, and in the middle of the pattern grew one small tree.[4]

Because Stephen is associated primarily with the Rings, he is thus also identified with their formation, a shape which is like the square within the circle, the circle within the square that Ansell discovers (LJ, p. 27). By using similar forms to describe things equated with Stephen on the one hand, and Ansell on the other, Forster provides a stylistic connection between the life of the body and the life of the spirit. And by allowing Rickie to think of the symbol before the fact of his child's birth, "a new symbol for the universe, a fresh circle within the square" (LJ, p. 211), Forster portends the thematic connection between the characters which occurs at the end of the novel:

> "But I'll catch you," promised Stephen. "We shall carry you up the hill to bed. In the morning you wake, have your row with old Em'ly, she kicks you out, we meet--We'll meet at the Rings!" (LJ, p. 299)

The final "meeting" between Stephen and Rickie on the Rings is somewhat ironic. Symbolizing both a physical and spiritual reunion, the word "meet" also portends Rickie's "meeting" death to save Stephen. By using this kind of complex word and object symbolism, Forster shows a connection between characters on a stylistic level, which often runs contrary to the

theme.

Forster shows a similar tension between theme and style in A Passage to India. As in The Longest Journey, this novel emphasizes, on a thematic level, the inevitable separation of human beings. That Adela cannot connect with Ronnie, nor Aziz with Fielding, nor Britain with India is indicated by the last few sentences of the novel: "But the horses didn't want it--they swerved apart."[5] What should bring the characters together is a similar experience in the Marabar Caves. Initially, they all find the landscape boring; Mrs. Moore finds it a "horrid, stuffy place" (PI, p. 140); Adela finds that "sight-seeing bores her" (PI, p. 151); and Fielding is unimpressed (PI, p. 156). But, in the end, each of them has a highly individual reaction to the caves: Mrs. Moore withdraws into herself; Adela thinks she has been attacked; and Fielding, though unhurt, feels "he ought to have been working at something else the whole time" (PI, p. 187). While the caves cause individual responses, they yet should be the thing which promotes connection, a connection voiced most emphatically by Godbole:

> 'I am informed that an evil action was performed in the Marabar Hills, and that a highly esteemed English lady is now seriously ill in consequence. My answer to that is this: that action was performed by Dr. Aziz.' He stopped and sucked in his thin cheeks. 'It was performed by the guide.' He stopped again. 'It was performed by you.' Now he had an air of daring and of coyness. 'It was performed by me.' He looked shyly down the sleeve of his coat. 'And by my students. It was even performed by the lady herself. When evil occurs, it expresses the whole of the universe. Similarly, when good occurs.' (PI, pp. 174-75)

Godbole's statement shows that each character is an integral part of the occurrence in the Marabar Caves, an integral part of the good and evil in life. Instead of seeing the connection which the Marabar Caves promote, the characters miss it, and they end as separate, rather than communal

human beings. The Caves represent, for Forster, a possibility of connection on a symbolic level, which is impossible on a thematic level, an idea not peculiar to his last novel. The problems of connection are just as subtle and just as ironic in the diction, the symbols, and the plot of Howards End.

At the simplest level, the level of diction and phrasing, many ironic connections take place between the characters in Howards End. Typical of this is the simple word "jaws" used most noticeably in regard to Jacky:

> Teeth of dazzling whiteness extended along either of Jacky's jaws, and positively weighed her head sideways, so large were they and so numerous. Take my word for it, that smile was simply stunning, and it is only you and I who will be fastidious, and complain that true joy begins in the eyes, and that the eyes of Jacky did not accord with her smile, but were anxious and hungry. (HE, pp. 60-61)

Seemingly a description of Jacky's physical appearance, this is also a comment on her soul, and, on both sides, Forster is typically ironic. The physical description is a degrading one. The narrator says that Jacky's smile is "simply stunning," and, of course, the word "simply" can be taken in two ways. The most obvious definition is one of praise; her smile is "absolutely" stunning. But the word is cautiously chosen, for it can also reveal singularity or stupidity. The smile is "only" stunning; there is nothing behind it; it is a simple smile. The word "jaws," a term usually associated with animals, reacts to negate the stunning quality of Jacky's smile. "That her eyes do not accord" is thus totally ironic, for her smile is hungry, and her eyes must be, if anything, an intensification of that hunger. The physical and spiritual worlds here collide; Jacky's personality relates directly to the physical and spiritual poverty of

Leonard: "His mind and his body had been alike underfed, because he was poor, and because he was modern they were always craving better food" (HE, p. 58).

Charles, who has had access to the "food" denied the Basts, should seemingly be far removed from such spiritual poverty. But Forster ironically uses the same word to describe him. While arguing with Mrs. Munt, Charles works his "jaws" (HE, p. 34). The connection with animals reappears in this description of Charles, and the reader immediately remembers the "ethics of the wolf-pack" (HE, p. 277), and the car running like "a beast of prey" (HE, p. 282). Forster makes the "jaws" connection clear in a final reference relating to the car: "The gravel sweep was weedy, and the grass had sprung up at the very jaws of the garage" (HE, p. 268). By using the term in relation to Leonard, to Jacky, and to the car, Forster shows a deliberate stylistic connection between the three. Though Charles considers himself a different species to the Basts, his spiritual, perhaps physical health, connects to them irrevocably.

Forster associates a second connotative word "husky" with Jacky's personality: "Jacky, in husky tones, replied, 'What ho!'" (HE, p. 63). The reader knows of Jacky's disrespectable appearance. She is "all strings and bell-pulls--ribbons, chains, bead necklaces that clinked and caught" (HE, p. 63). We know also of her past, punctuated by successive love affairs, and her "husky" tone of voice reinforces that past. Henry, who has been a part of her past, refuses to see the connection. But Forster forces it on the reader, for during the first kiss between Margaret and Henry, Henry speaks to Margaret in Jacky's tones: "Mr. Wilcox, who was in front, said 'Margaret' rather huskily" (HE, p. 185). The connotations of the word "husky" used in terms of voice

are usually sexual ones, and, by associating Jacky and Henry with the same word, Forster can show a similarity between them, which Henry denies. In case the reader misses the repetition, Forster makes Henry evaluate his time in Cypress before the affair is discovered: "Oh, Greece and the Levant. I used to go out for sport and business in Cypress" (HE, p. 157). Forster is very careful about the wording here, for it necessarily reflects on Henry's future explanation of the event. That his affair with Jacky before it is discovered is like "sport" to him reaffirms his dubious sexual morality and makes the connection which "husky" establishes between Jacky and himself a particularly apt one. Single words placed carefully by Forster can thus create a subtle ironic effect; while the characters believe themselves to be very different, the reader knows that they are similar.

Forster uses phrases in the same way as single words to emphasize the connection between characters. A good example of this is the phrase, "hands on the ropes." Originally, Helen uses the phrase in referring to the Wilcoxes. She comments that "the Wilcoxes were so competent, and seemed to have their hands on all the ropes" (HE, p. 41). Margaret repeats the exact words several pages later (HE, p. 112), and Henry thinks the same thing of himself (HE, p. 138). Emphasizing practicality, competence, security, the phrase seems totally applicable to the Wilcox family; it implies a security from the sea as much as Margaret's island metaphor does. But the words are somewhat ironic, and the irony stems primarily from Leonard's reassessment of the phrase. Leonard uses the words in regard to the Schlegels, but the meaning changes slightly: "Those Miss. Schlegels had come to it; they had done the trick; their hands were upon the ropes, once and for all" (HE, pp. 62-63). One

notices immediately the formality of Leonard's "upon the ropes," as opposed to Helen's "on the ropes," and the changed position of "all." The Schlegel's hands are not on "all" the ropes, but on some ropes, and there is an enduring quality to the situation. Leonard uses the phrase a second time with a further variation "all, all with their hands on the ropes" (HE, p. 67). This time, the position of "all" serves to intensify the difference between Leonard and those who have their hands on the ropes. Leonard's use of the phrase points to the impropriety of Helen's original phrase. For Henry may have his hands on the ropes of commerce, but he slips slightly in the domain of personal relations. And Helen may be secure in a personal realm, but her handling of money is questionable. There can be no doubt that Leonard's phrase reacts ironically against Helen's, for neither the Wilcoxes nor the Schlegels have their hands on "all" the ropes. Forster uses the phrase not only to connect the characters on a stylistic level, but also to show subtle approval or disapproval of them.

Typical of this is Henry's proposal to Margaret. While they drive to Ducie Street, the marriage question is obviously on Henry's mind, and he asks Margaret about her emotional life. Margaret, uncharacteristically, interrupts him:

> 'You, too, feel lonely?'
> 'Horribly. Hullo, Parliament's back!'
> Mr. Wilcox glanced at Parliament contemptuously. The more important ropes of life lay elsewhere. (HE, p. 165)

Henry's usual inability to see the important ropes of life is here denied. For he questions Margaret about her emotional life, and she replies with a reference to business. There is some humor in the scene; one can but recall Henry's usual obtuseness in the area of personal relations. There

can be no doubt, however, that Forster wishes the reader to realize Henry's changed perspective at this point in the novel. Even Margaret comments that "he seemed this afternoon to enlarge his field, and to note qualities outside neatness, obedience and decision" (HE, p. 166). With the use of the phrase, Forster both praises Henry and separates himself from Margaret. It is a technique which allows the reader a new perspective on the characters.

Forster uses the same phrase negatively in terms of Margaret. While she attempts to rationalize Henry's affair with Jacky, Forster subtly gives us his opinion:

> Here was the core of the question. Henry must be forgiven, and made better by love; nothing else mattered. Mrs. Wilcox, that unquiet yet kindly ghost, must be left to her own wrong. To her everything was in proportion now, and she, too, would pity the man who was blundering up and down their lives. Had Mrs. Wilcox known of this trespass? An interesting question, but Margaret fell asleep, tethered by affection. . . . (HE, pp. 240-41)

The word "tethered" not only recalls the rope phrase, but also connects again with the animal world. Margaret rationalizes Henry's indiscretion, but forgets Mrs. Wilcox, and Forster sees, in the rationalization, a loss of human freedom, a descent again to the beast. The notion of "tethering" is given added support in a final rope image associated with Leonard. During the love-making scene between Leonard and Helen, Helen tries to cut the rope which binds Leonard to the earth:

> Her excitement grew as she tried to cut the rope that fastened Leonard to the earth. Woven of bitter experience, it resisted her. (HE, p. 237)

With this final image, the difference between Leonard and the Schlegels is made clear. For the financially stable, "hands on the ropes" represents

an active ascent out of the sea; financial security is a liberating, healthy thing. For Leonard, the same ropes of materialism create an imprisoning effect; he is passively bound by them. Helen's attempt to cut the ropes is indicative of two things; one, that she herself has no regard for the monetary world, and two, that Leonard must free himself of materialism to transcend his own life. It is a phrase which not only connects the characters in terms of materialism, but also shows that materialism is, perhaps, an unhealthy thing. "Hands on the ropes" is a great stylistic connecting device. Although characters appear to be different at the level of theme, Forster clearly connects them at the level of style. Careful study of the phrase shows that Forster can be the "impartial mediator" Stone says he is not.[6]

In a somewhat more humorous way, Forster makes the characters use the phrase "safe as houses" in their speeches to one another. Henry, for instance, describes Dempster's Bank as "safe as houses" (HE, p. 191). There are two ironies here. Not only does Dempster's Bank smash, but also, throughout the novel, we are made aware of the categorical unsafeness of houses. Houses fall to make room for flats; flats are destroyed to create new flats. Henry's statement is thus a rather precarious one, and Margaret's action on the advice even more unsound. Mrs. Munt's repetition of the phrase: "When it comes to music, I am as safe as houses" (HE, p. 51), becomes a highly humorous one, an authorial laugh at the characters. It is Leonard who emerges well in the connection. His is a much more cautious response: "Wickham Place, W., though a risk, was as safe as most things, and he would risk it" (HE, p. 50). Leonard's caution is the caution of a man who has been "had" in the past, but his response is more thoughtful than Henry's and is intimately related to Margaret's

hope to "risk things all her life," to be unprepared (HE, p. 71). Forster again uses the phrase ironically as a connective between characters. As readers, we know more than the characters; we realize that "safe as houses" is a risky statement in the context of the novel, and we must evaluate characters on their use of the phrase.

A second stylistic device used to connect characters in Howards End is the use of symbol. As in A Passage to India and The Longest Journey, Forster here uses the landscape as a symbolic means of connecting characters. The Six Hills dominate this novel, and, though each character must be aware of them, their responses to them are markedly different. By showing differing reactions to the Hills, Forster gives subtle authorial comment. Mrs. Munt is the first character to "see" the Hills: "For about a mile a series of tiled and slated houses passed before Mrs. Munt's inattentive eyes, a series broken at one point by six Danish tumuli that stood shoulder to shoulder along the highroad, tombs of soldiers" (HE, p. 29). Interestingly, Mrs. Munt misses the hills; her eyes are inattentive, and the description thus comes straight from the narrator's consciousness. Henry's reaction, later in the novel, is somewhat more alert; he calls them "curious mounds" (HE, p. 204), recognizing a kind of mystical significance attached to them, but typically, blocking the understanding. It is Margaret, finally, who imbues the Hills with an imaginative significance, calling them "tombs of warriors, breasts of the spring" (HE, p. 301). For her, as for Forster, the Hills represent a renewal of life, and the idea is supported at the end of the novel when the Six Hills move beneath her "as if alive" (HE, p. 324). As in A Passage to India, Forster here selects a feature of the landscape as an unchangeable reference point. The reader knows that the feature recurs

consistently throughout the novel, and that it provides a connection between the characters, which not only shows the similarities, but also the differences in their perspectives.

Forster selects a second object, the fish, as a device to show stylistic similarities between characters. As noted previously, the sea in the novel can be construed as a destructive force, which threatens the individual. Margaret considers herself safely on an island above the sea, but Forster forces the connection. In reply to Mrs. Wilcox, who has commented on Margaret's inexperience and youth, Margaret says: "I wish I could see myself as you see me--foreshortened into a Backfisch" (HE, p. 93). Stallybrass translates the term in the notes as literally "baked fish" (HE, p. 349), meaning adolescent girl. And it is clearly the literal meaning which Forster wishes the reader to see, for he humorously continues the image when Margaret orders fish pie at Simpson's, and Henry assures her that it is "not a bit the thing to go for" (HE, p. 156). Forster again works behind the characters creating subtle ironies which they cannot understand. The fish, traditionally associated with Christ or with Christianity, is ironically divested of its meaning, and becomes merely an object to be identified with Margaret. She assumes that she is safely above the sea, but Forster, by repeated references to the fish, connects her irrevocably with it. And Henry is not exempt. His office has, for Margaret, connotations of the sea: "Another map hung opposite, on which the whole continent appeared, looking like a whale marked out for blubber" (HE, p. 196). Margaret's assessment of Henry's office is an apt one; the office represents imperialism, an imperialism directed against those who are under the sea. Oddly enough, the imperialism must also include Margaret, who, as a "backfisch," is a member of the sea. But the

irony does not stop here, for Forster also describes Henry in terms of fish: "he took the bait" (HE, p. 227). Henry's imperialism must inevitably be destructive not only to Margaret, but also to himself. Like the Marabar Caves, these symbols connect the characters in never-ending subtle ironies; the echoes reverberate outward like the rings of a circle.

A third symbol, hay, is another good example of Forster's stylistic irony, and the object which most conclusively connects the characters in Howards End.[7] Helen sets the tone for the symbol in her first letters to Margaret. The reader learns that Mrs. Wilcox always carries hay in her hands, and Helen assumes that it is "for rabbits or something" (HE, p. 20). The irony intrudes when Helen describes the Wilcox household in terms of rabbits: "it's like a rabbit warren" (HE, p. 21). The reader's traditional interpretation of the rabbit as a lower form of life with noted tendencies towards rapid and incessant procreation is here humorously applied to the Wilcoxes. But it is not only the Wilcoxes who are so described. Leonard, about to enter his flat, glances "suspiciously to right and left, like a rabbit that is going to bolt into its hole" (HE, p. 59). Charles comments to Evie that "We're in a bad hole" (HE, p. 187). Henry's office is described in terms of rabbits: "of little rabbit-hutches faced with glass or wire, of little rabbits" (HE, p. 196). And Tom, near the end of the novel, thinks that Tibby might be a rabbit (HE, p. 293).

Margaret, ostensibly, takes over the role of provider for the rabbits at Ruth's death. Identified with the grass which trickles "through her fingers like sand" (HE, p. 245), and confused by Miss. Avery for the first Mrs. Wilcox (HE, p. 202), Margaret's position as provider seems assured. But Forster typically qualifies the connection. In one

passage, Forster shows the difference between Margaret and Ruth:

> . . . she was not interested in the New English Art Club, nor in the dividing-line between Journalism and Literature, which was started as a conversational hare. The delightful people darted after it with cries of joy, Margaret leading them, and not till the meal was half over did they realize that the principal guest had taken no part in the chase. (HE, p. 84)

Ruth, as the provider for the rabbits, sees no need to participate in the chase. Margaret does, however, and in participating, comes perilously close to Henry's kind of imperialism. One remembers immediately the capture of Helen at the end of the novel where "Sick at heart," Margaret joins "the chase" (HE, p. 279). Though Margaret emerges, at the end of the novel, as the future provider for the family, she yet possesses some of the characteristics of those she provides for. And the provision is yet a rather ironic one, for many of the characters, Charles, Henry, Tibby, and Evie, are allergic to the sustenance she provides. That these characters suffer from hay fever makes the ending of the novel, the cutting of the hay, a rather ambiguous conclusion, healthy for some, unhealthy for others. The ending represents a meeting of seemingly disparate characters with different resources for coping with their lives. Though Wilde suggests that the conclusion is a combination of "fortuitous circumstance" and "accident,"[8] it is clear that Forster has prepared us carefully for the finale. The use of the fish and the rabbit show Forster's attempts at impartiality towards characters in the novel. Though a bias towards Margaret seems probable on a thematic level, it is denied through irony on a stylistic level.

Forster uses a similar ironic tension between style and theme in yet a fourth way in Howards End. One of the major thematic battles in the novel occurs between Red-bloods and Mollycoddles,[9] or between physical

prowess and physical weakness. The Wilcoxes, in the Red-blood tradition, are consistently associated with the color red. The cushions of Charles's motor-car are red (HE, p. 31), and the chairs in Henry's Ducie Street house are maroon "as if a motor-car had spawned" (HE, p. 167). At various times, however, individuals from the Schlegel family are drawn into the Wilcox orbit. Helen leans back "luxuriously among the cushions of his motor-car" (HE, p. 38), and Mrs. Munt settles herself into a "luxurious cavern of red leather" (HE, p. 31). But again, the color "connects" with almost every character in the novel. During the Beethoven concert, Leonard gets "very red" (HE, p. 50), Helen blushes "crimson" (HE, p. 69), and goes "scarlet all over her face" (HE, p. 191). And Mrs. Munt, in her altercation with Charles, gets "blood-red in the face" (HE, p. 33). With the image, Forster shows that the Schlegels can be as much a part of the physical Red-blood world as the Wilcoxes. It is to be remembered that Helen and Margaret have walked over the Apennines with their luggage on their backs (HE, p. 181), and that Leonard is a descendant of the agricultural laborers around Shropshire. That Charles is not a total Red-blood, nor Helen an absolute Mollycoddle, is shown by Margaret's humorous assessment of Charles's bathing party:

> But these athletes seemed paralysed. They could not bathe without their appliances, though the morning sun was calling and the last mists were rising from the dimpling stream. Had they found the life of the body after all? Could not the men whom they despised as milksops beat them, even on their own ground? (HE, p. 217)

Margaret's thought shows that Charles's Red-blood leanings are tentative ones, that the life of the body is perhaps only a facade. The thing which Margaret does not recognize is the changeable nature of her own personality, for she may be just as much a part of the physical Red-blood

world as Charles. The Wilcox mentality, as Leonard recognizes, represents imperialism and a preparation for cosmopolitanism:

> At the chalk-pit a motor passed him. In it was another type whom Nature favours--the Imperial. Healthy, ever in motion, it hopes to inherit the earth. It breeds as quickly as the yeoman, and as soundly; strong is the temptation to acclaim it as a super-yeoman, who carries his country's virtue overseas. But the Imperialist is not what he thinks or seems. He is a destroyer. He prepares the way for cosmopolitanism. . . . (HE, p. 315)

Identified with the car and the impersonal pronoun "it," the imperial, the destroyer, can be no other than the Wilcox family. It is their kind of imperialism which prepares the way for cosmopolitanism, a decidedly negative end result. Ironically, however, it is the Schlegels who are the representatives of this cosmopolitanism. Charles remarks that Margaret is a cosmopolitan (HE, p. 110), and Tibby says the same of himself (HE, p. 165). The Schlegels thus emerge as the by-product of Wilcoxian imperialism. The stylistic connections operating in tension with the theme in Howards End are much more complicated than the critics assume.

It is at the third level, the level of plot, that Forster shows emphatically the need for connection. By creating parallel situations within the text, Forster can comment subtly on character action. Typical of this is the arrival of Mrs. Munt at Howards End, and the subsequent handling of the affair by Mrs. Wilcox:

> When she saw Charles angry, Paul frightened and Mrs. Munt in tears, she heard her ancestors say: 'Separate those human beings who will hurt each other most. The rest can wait.' So she did not ask questions. Still less did she pretend that nothing had happened, as a competent society hostess would have done. She said: 'Miss. Schlegel, would you take your aunt up to your room or to my room, whichever you think best. Paul, do find Evie, and tell her lunch for six, but I'm not sure whether we shall all be downstairs for it.' (HE, p. 36)

Mrs. Wilcox's gift is an intuitive understanding of human emotions, and an accompanying graceful command of those emotions. She does not ask questions; she merely directs the action. And yet, the direction is natural, without artifice; she does not pretend that nothing has happened, but assumes, rather, that it has, and goes straight to the heart of the matter. Mrs. Wilcox's grace and calm are a product of her reliance on her ancestors, and it is a knowledge that comes to her almost mystically.

A parallel incident occurs when Margaret returns from Ducie Street, and whispers to Helen of Henry's proposal. Helen's reaction is totally different:

> 'But you've never conceivably--you've never--' she pulled herself together. 'Tibby, hurry up through; I can't hold this gate indefinitely. Aunt Juley! I say, Aunt Juley, make the tea, will you, and Frieda; we've got to talk houses, and'll come on afterwards. And then, turning her face to her sister's, she burst into tears. (HE, p. 174)

The comparison of the situations shows Forster's comment on character. Where Ruth exhibited a calm, quiet control, Helen is emotional and domineering; her orders carry with them an edge of irritability. In terms of the first incident, Helen commits two fatal errors; she asks questions, and then pretends that nothing has happened: "we've got to talk houses." She is, in Forster's terms, a "competent society hostess." But the competence quickly disappears. Where Ruth turns quietly away from the source of the aggravation, from Charles and the "throbbing, stinking car," Helen turns to Margaret and bursts into tears.

Another parallel situation occurs in the two love-making scenes between Wilcoxes and Schlegels. Margaret tells Helen that her love with Henry is "prose" (HE, p. 177), while Helen's love for Paul was romance, and Forster gives adequate stylistic support for the theory. There is

nothing romantic about Henry's first kiss:

> They walked ahead briskly. The parade and the road after it were well-lighted, but it was darker in Aunt Juley's garden. As they were going up by the side path, through some rhododendrons, Mr. Wilcox, who was in front, said 'Margaret' rather huskily, turned, dropped his cigar, and took her in his arms. (HE, p. 185)

Henry's business-like mind is readily apparent in this love-making scene. The lovers walk ahead "briskly"; Henry is in front, and he performs the movements of the lover like the items on a business agenda. He calls Margaret's name, turns, drops his cigar, and takes her in his arms. The scene seems simply placed, but, with the use of the rhododendrons, Forster creates subtle ironies, which reverberate and expand outward. The flowers, only casually mentioned in the first scene, recur in a narrative comment only a few pages later: "They met in the rhododendrons of yesterday. In the daylight the bushes were inconsiderable" (HE, p. 189). The narrator's assessment of the rhododendrons is a highly ironic one, for the reader knows that the flowers are a symbol of Henry's kiss, and that, in the narrator's view, they are "inconsiderable." Henry's assessment is, however, exactly the opposite:

> 'Here's our hostess. Good morning, Mrs. Munt. Fine rhododendrons. Good morning, Frau Liesecke; we manage to grow flowers in England, don't we?' (HE, p. 189)

According to Henry, the rhododendrons are "fine flowers," representative of his kiss; in Margaret's view, Henry's love-making is only a "seed" or a "suggestion," not a "full-blown" "bouquet" (HE, p. 180), and in the narrator's opinion, the kiss, like the flowers, is "inconsiderable." By selecting one particular object to symbolize the scene, and then showing various characters' reactions to it, Forster can create subtle ironies

for the reader which are beyond the characters' comprehension.

The irony continues when the reader remembers the parallel description of Paul's kiss:

> He had drawn her out of the house, where there was danger of surprise and light; he had led her by a path he knew, until they stood under the column of the vast wych-elm. A man in the darkness, he had whispered 'I love you' when she was desiring love. (HE, p. 39)

The features of the passage concerning Henry and the passage concerning Paul are similar; there is darkness and light, a path, and a symbol, in the latter case, the wych-elm. But the emotion of the second passage is different. Paul's characteristics are gentleness, slowness. He "draws" Helen, "leads" her and "whispers." There is nothing brisk or husky about this scene, for Paul is responsive to Helen's needs, and romance is guaranteed. The wych-elm ironically pervades the scene. The symbol of the past and of continuation, the elm represents the enduring quality of this love, as opposed to the transient nature of Margaret's love, symbolized by the rhododendrons. However momentary Helen's love, the wych-elm guarantees its survival "the scene that he had evoked endured," and ironically supports the narrator's idea that "collisions of this trivial sort" may shake open the doors of heaven.

Forster uses parallel situations not only to connect events, but also to foreshadow them. Typical of this is Helen's assessment of the architecture in Queen's Hall:

> Much did she censure the attenuated Cupids who encircle the ceiling of Queen's Hall, inclining each to each with vapid gesture, and clad in sallow pantaloons, on which the October sunlight struck. 'How awful to marry a man like those Cupids!' thought Helen. (HE, p. 45)

Helen's original sight of the architecture prepares the reader for the Cupids in Leonard's room, one of the few objects which are his own. Helen's impression of the Cupids is one of attenuation, vapidness, and sallowness, a description from which Leonard, in his poverty, is not far removed. Her thought of marriage to the Cupids is thus particularly ironic, foreshadowing her own physical connection with Leonard. Interestingly, however, it is not only Helen who connects with Leonard, but also Margaret. When Leonard enters his room after the Beethoven concert, he inadvertently kicks the table, and smashes Jacky's picture to the ground (HE, p. 60). Only a few pages later, Margaret does the same with Dolly's glass (HE, p. 82). The similarity of Margaret's and Leonard's action proves on an artistic and stylistic level the inevitable "connection" between the two, a connection which is often denied at the level of theme.

Like other devices, parallel plotting can hint at authorial comment. The most important of these authorial comments arises from the parallelism involved in the sight of the characters. As readers, we are assured at different times throughout the novel that it is impossible to "see life steadily and see it whole" (HE, p. 165), and Forster assigns to each character either the trait of steadiness or the trait of wholeness, but seldom both. The word "concentrate," for instance, characterizes the vision of Mrs. Munt (HE, p. 29), and of Henry (HE, p. 188), and "steadiness" is the primary characteristic of Leonard (HE, p. 62), and of Charles (HE, p. 105). Mrs. Wilcox is perhaps the only exception to the statement. According to Henry, she is a steady woman (HE, p. 100), but in Margaret's assessment, Ruth sees whole, viewing with an "equal" eye the deep that she enters and the shore that she leaves (HE, p. 11). As Ruth's

successor, and as the heroine of the novel, Margaret might be expected to also see both steadily and whole. But Forster is, as always, careful about the assessment. Three times, he refers subtly to the inadequacy of Margaret's sight. Early in the novel, she picks up the pince-nez, to "which she had recently taken" (HE, p. 11); during the train journey to Ducie Street, her eyes are troubling her (HE, p. 163), and, at the end of the novel, the pince-nez are referred to again (HE, p. 328). Margaret possesses the capacity to see whole, but she is unable to see steadily. Unlike the Wilcoxes, she cannot "concentrate" on details (HE, p. 165), and although she laughs at the "breezy Wilcox manner," which lacks "the clearness of vision that is imperative for truth" (HE, p. 184), Forster shows that Henry's vision is just as accurate as Margaret's. A connection between the two provides for the ideal prospect of seeing "both steadily and whole."

It is through a study of the intricacy of style in Howards End that Forster's position as "impartial mediator" is made clear. Though Margaret's perspective may be the dominant one in the novel, and though her attitudes are given some credence by Forster, subtle stylistic ironies modify her importance in the novel. By using words, phrases, symbols and plot in ironic, or contradictory ways, Forster shows the inevitable connections which must occur between disparate human beings.

CHAPTER V

NARRATIVE STANCE

Forster's style is somewhat of an anomaly in twentieth-century fiction. His contemporaries, novelists such as Virginia Woolf, were concerned, like himself, with the novelistic disparity between art and life, with the distinction between showing and telling which Booth discusses.[1] But Woolf sees the reader's involvement in the imaginative life of the novel as paramount, and, by allowing characters to narrate their own stories, she diminishes authorial presence, creating, for the reader, the illusion of life.[2] Forster, on the other hand, uses highly self-conscious narrators,[3] who, by commenting consistently on the characters, the method of writing, and the universe, issue continual reminders of the art inherent in the fiction. It is this technique which caused Virginia Woolf to criticize Howards End. She says that because Forster is ". . . apt to pervade his books like a careful hostess who is anxious to introduce, to explain, to warn her guests of a step here, of a draught there,"[4] the imaginative life of the novel diminishes. Virginia Woolf's comments are apt, but somehow evasive, for Forster believed that fictional method lies in ". . . the power of the writer to bounce the reader into accepting what he says" (AN, p. 54). In order to understand this power, the reader must first have a more comprehensive view of the "careful hostess." We must decide on the characteristics of the narrator, on the manner in which he approaches the characters and the reader, and on how Forster uses him to "bounce" the reader into acceptance of his ideas. If we accept Booth's statement that "the rhetorical dimension in literature

is inescapable . . . ,"[5] we must necessarily analyze the process and result of that rhetoric.

An immediately noticeable characteristic of Forster's narrator is his varying degrees of authority in relation to the plot. At times, the narrator explains to the reader why events have happened in the past, and also warns him of events which are to come. Typical of this is his understanding of Helen's affair with Paul. He realizes that she has fallen in love with a family more than with an individual, and that because of this, "Paul was inevitable" (HE, p. 38). At the same time, the narrator tells us that Helen's affair with Paul will have lasting consequences: "In all the variable years that followed she never saw the like of it again" (HE, p. 39). It is clear, from both statements, that the narrator's perspective is a distanced one, that he is looking back on the events after they have happened. But it is also apparent, that he is, at this point, exerting control over the movement of the plot and simultaneously over the reader's anticipation of the events. By telling us what will happen to Helen in the ensuing chapters, the narrator exhibits an authority over his story which denies both the traditional concepts of plot and of reader suspense. Like the handling of diction and syntax discussed in the second chapter, this is a technique which announces the narrative art of the novel.

But the narrator is, at other times, curiously unable to determine or to explain events. Describing the friendship between Ruth and Margaret, he states:

> The friendship between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox, which was to develop so quickly and with such strange results, may perhaps have had its beginnings at Speyer, in the spring. Perhaps the elder lady, as she gazed at the vulgar, ruddy cathedral, and

> listened to the talk of Helen and her husband, may have detected in the other and less charming of the sisters a deeper sympathy, a sounder judgement. She was capable of detecting such things. Perhaps it was she who had desired the Miss Schlegels to be invited to Howards End, and Margaret whose presence she had particularly desired. All this is speculation: Mrs. Wilcox has left few clear indications behind her. It is certain that she came to call at Wickham Place a fortnight later. . . . (HE, p. 75)

The narrator exhibits, in the passage, a strange mixture of authority and fallibility. The first sentence alerts us to the problem, for he tells us, ahead of time, that the friendship between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox develops quickly, but he is unable to comprehend the reasons for the friendship. The repetition of the tentative verb "may" and the equally tentative adverb "perhaps" indicates the narrator's reluctance to comment on the reasons for the relationship. He is, at once, surprisingly authoritative about events: "It is certain that she came to call," and equally timid about explanation: "This is all speculation." The narrator wavers for valid, deliberate purposes. By stepping back from comment and showing his fallibility, he gives the impression of the difficulty of interpreting human relationships. He ensures us both of the living nature of the personalities and of the story, and of his own human foibles. And it is the humanity of the narrator which Forster wishes to make abundantly clear. Though the narrator perceives that the friendship develops quickly, Margaret's opinion is exactly the opposite. She is impatient at its slowness, wants things "settled up immediately," and presses "on the ceremony," pencil in hand (HE, p. 89). In terms of the quickness or slowness of the friendship, Forster makes certain that dates are provided. The two meet in the spring, once again in November, and the friendship "is developed" by Christmas. As readers, we are given

the opportunity of evaluating for ourselves. But whether we agree with Margaret or with the narrator is largely irrelevant. What is relevant is that the narrator can be at once both authoritative and fallible, that he is a human being, and that we must be as careful in our assessments of him as we are of the characters.

Forster continues to play with the degree of the narrator's knowledge in a second description of Margaret and Ruth:

> Several days passed.
> Was Mrs. Wilcox one of the unsatisfactory people--there are many of them--who dangle intimacy and then withdraw it? They evoke our interests and affections, and keep the life of the spirit dawdling round them. Then they withdraw. When physical passion is involved, there is a definite name for such behaviour--flirting--and if carried far enough, it is punishable by law. But no law--not public opinion even--punishes those who coquette with friendship, though the dull ache that they inflict, the sense of misdirected effort and exhaustion, may be as intolerable. Was she one of these? (HE, p. 89)

Again, in this passage, the narrator shows a mixture of authority and fallibility. A beautifully structured paragraph, it both begins and ends with the same rhetorical question, the effect of which is to create a haunting echo in the reader's mind. All our experience of Mrs. Wilcox tends to offer a negative answer to the question; we are warned, however, that she may be a coquette. Is the warning confirmed when she leaves Margaret for a month at a time without corresponding, or when she leaves her at the train station in favour of Evie and Henry? Obviously, these are questions which the reader must answer for himself; the narrator is typically reluctant to comment. What he does do, however, is translate the issue of Mrs. Wilcox into the broader issues of friendship and the law, and with the broader issues outlined, he becomes increasingly more authoritative. He states that physical flirtation, which may develop into

sexual assault, is punishable by law, but that emotional flirtation is never controlled. He makes a special plea, punctuated by dashes, for the public to react. The phrase "not public opinion even," suggests a kind of editorializing about universal issues, which is opposed to the narrator's reticence on personal issues, and it supports Forster's contention that the writer should be wary of taking the reader into his confidence about the characters (AN, p. 56). This is a technique on the other hand, of "intermittent knowledge," of "playing fast and loose" with the characters (AN, p. 56), of humanizing the narrator and showing his fallibility. We are to trust this narrator only as much as we trust any human being.

As with authority and fallibility, the narrator also shows varying degrees of articulateness and confusion. Margaret, usually a very articulate character, considered by Ruth to phrase things most "splendidly" (HE, p. 86), is sometimes strangely unable to express herself. It is at these points when the narrator speaks for her:

> Her thought drew being from the obscure borderland. She could not explain in so many words, but she felt that those who prepare for all the emergencies of life beforehand may equip themselves at the expense of joy. It is necessary to prepare for an examination, or a dinner-party, or a possible fall in the price of stock; those who attempt human relations must adopt another method, or fail. 'Because I'd sooner risk it,' was her lame conclusion. (HE, p. 71)

There is a notable difference in the passage between what Margaret feels and what she is able to express. It is obvious that she cannot explain her emotion, and, with exuberant confidence, the narrator takes over. His articulateness is clearly opposed to Margaret's, whose conclusion is "lame" in the narrator's view. By exposing Margaret's inarticulateness, the narrator subtly praises his own virtues, and promotes the reader's

confidence in his verbal ability. We are aware of both articulateness and omniscience on the narrator's part; with the explanation of Margaret's thought, the narrator becomes submerged in the character's mind. Margaret's inarticulateness is a rhetorical device used both to compliment the narrator and to show his sympathy for the character's ideas.

But he is not always so articulate. In the portrait of Jacky, for instance, he shows a considerable reluctance to describe accurately:

> A woman entered, of whom it is simplest to say that she was not respectable. Her appearance was awesome. She seemed all strings and bell-pulls--ribbons, chains, bead necklaces that clinked and caught--and a boa of azure feathers hung round her neck, with the ends uneven. Her throat was bare, wound with a double row of pearls, her arms were bare to the elbows, and might again be detected at the shoulder, through cheap lace. Her hat, which was flowery, resembled those punnets, covered with flannel, which we sowed with mustard and cress in our childhood and which germinated here yes, and there no. She wore it on the back of her head. As for her hair, or rather hairs, they are too complicated to describe, but one system went down her back, lying in a thick pad there, while another, created for a lighter density, rippled around her forehead. The face--the face does not signify. It was the face of the photograph, but older, and the teeth were not so numerous as the photograph had suggested, and certainly not so white. Yes, Jacky was past her prime, whatever that prime may have been. (HE, p. 63)

The narrator's problem with articulation about Jacky is introduced in the first sentence; he picks the "simplest," or equally, the most polite way of describing her. Curiously, the most polite way is found in a negative syntactical construction, "she was not respectable," and this negative construction reacts against the positive construction which follows, "Her appearance was awesome." A stylistic trick occurs here, for "awesome," a word which can be interpreted either positively or negatively according to its context, is made negative by the influence of the construction which precedes it. It is an ambivalent, cautious stance that

the narrator adopts in the passage. Unwilling to assume too judgemental an air, he shows a reluctance to describe on the one hand, and a necessity for description on the other. He at once states that Jacky's hair is "too complicated to describe," but goes on to describe it adequately. A strange ironic tension thus exists in the passage between the fictional necessity for accurate description and the moral position of the narrator, between his evident duty as a story-teller and his moral fastidiousness as a man. He attempts fairness by equating Jacky's hat with a childhood memory, both his own and the reader's, but the metaphor is clearly ambivalent, germinating "here yes, and there no." The technique of ambivalence, of hanging back from description, is a technique designed to be non-judgemental. But there is an irony involved. For although the narrator attempts fairness by ambivalent description, his portrait is, at times, alarmingly specific, and ironically, a judgement is always implied.

As well as employing various stances of authority and fallibility, and of articulateness and confusion, Forster's narrator also shows shifting stances in regard to the characters. Critics have seen Margaret's voice as the pervasive one in the novel. Wilfred Stone comments, for instance, that ". . . Margaret's voice comes closest to Forster's own, and he makes no attempt at all to hide his partisanship for her and her ideal of 'proportion.'"[6] Stone's comment, if it is correct, would prove Howards End a very poor novel in Forster's view. For Forster, it was wrong to take the reader into the author's confidence about the characters (AN, p. 56); it meant playing favorites, and to this Forster was clearly opposed. Only through a thorough study of the narrative voice in the novel can "partisanship" be discovered or denied.

The narrator's stance in regard to Margaret is an interweaving of three positions, one very close, where it is sometimes impossible to determine where Margaret's thoughts end and the narrator's begin, one which overrides or negates Margaret's opinion, and one which operates from a middle distance, proposing both positive and negative view-points. An example of the close stance occurs after Margaret discovers Henry's indiscretion:

> Her belief in comradeship was stifled, and she saw life as from that glass saloon on the Great Western, which sheltered male and female alike from the fresh air. Are the sexes really races, each with its own code of morality, and their mutual love a mere device of Nature's to keep things going? Strip human intercourse of the proprieties, and is it reduced to this? Her judgement told her no. She knew that out of Nature's device we have built a magic that will win us immortality. Far more mysterious than the call of sex to sex is the tenderness that we throw into that call; far wider is the gulf between us and the farmyard than between the farmyard and the garbage that nourishes it. We are evolving in ways that Science cannot measure, to ends that Theology dares not contemplate. . . . Margaret knew all this, but for the moment she could not feel it. . . . (HE, p. 238)

The passage is a good instance of the interweaving of the narrator's and the character's thoughts. The first sentence is Margaret's thought filtered through the narrator's consciousness, but it is an impartial, objective view which is presented; as shown by the preterite verb "saw," the narrator as yet indicates no sympathy for Margaret's ideas. In the two rhetorical questions which follow, however, the verb changes to a present tense, and the questions are unattributed to narrator or character. Are they Margaret's questions or the narrator's or both? It seems likely that the last solution is the best, for in the following sentence, Margaret's judgement of the question is given. In order to answer the question, she must first know of it, and the narrator, as presiding

consciousness, knows both question and answer. In the rhetorical questions, then, the voices of character and narrator overlap.

A similar technique occurs in the next segment of the quotation. "She knew that out of Nature's device" is part of Margaret's thought, but in the discussion of sexuality and tenderness which follows, the narrator takes over. Only part of Margaret can comprehend the narrator's assertions; she understands at a rational level, but cannot understand at an emotional level: "Margaret knew all this, but for the moment she could not feel it." At this point of time, then, in the fictional present and the characters' past, it is the narrator who is doing the explanation. By superseding Margaret's present thoughts to give a more complete picture, the narrator shows an in-depth knowledge of the character. The passage, switching from Margaret's thoughts to the narrator's, often without warning, is a good instance of the intimacy between the two. But it is not only Margaret who understands his position; the reader, too, is intimately involved. It is an intimacy to which we can scarcely react negatively. For the collective "we" is introduced slowly and gracefully at the end of each clause until the reader is gradually accustomed to the idea. Only then does the punch come: "We are evolving in ways that Science cannot measure." The sympathy operating between character and narrator must also operate between narrator and reader.

But Margaret and the narrator are not always in agreement. At times, he completely overrides Margaret's opinion. In a conversation between herself and Aunt Juley over Helen's reaction to the Wilcoxes' relocation opposite them, Margaret gives the opinion that Helen's love for Paul is dead. Aunt Juley cannot understand Margaret's position, and the narrator can understand still less: "indeed Margaret was making a

most questionable statement--that any emotion, any interest, once vividly aroused, can wholly die" (HE, p. 69). At other times, the narrator sets himself in direct opposition to Margaret's assessment of herself. She believes herself a practical person: "'Yes, I'm practical,' she murmured, stooping over the mowing-machine and playing with the grass which trickled through her fingers like sand" (HE, p. 245). Margaret's belief that she is practical is a somewhat questionable statement in the light of the images which follow. She stoops over the mowing-machine, a symbol of science, of competence, of practicality, but at the same time, she plays with the grass, a symbol of Mrs. Wilcox, of other-worldliness, of impracticality. Though Margaret conceives of herself as a practical person, the narrator shows, through the images, that her assessment is not wholly correct. And he questions her assessment further after a remark made by Henry that Margaret is not as "unpractical" as she "pretends." The narrator, in reply, assures us that she is: "But she was--quite as unpractical" (HE, p. 165). The narrator's comment is in direct opposition to Margaret's; as readers, we must decide who is most correct, and the decision can only be made with regard to the contradictory images of the first passage. The juxtaposition of the mowing-machine and the grass, deliberately placed by Forster, shows that Margaret is neither completely practical nor completely impractical; she is as contradictory a human being as any. By creating oppositions in the assessments of Margaret and the narrator, Forster shows that characters cannot be judged absolutely, that the thesis and antithesis of any statement regarding character may be equally valid.

Very close to Margaret at one time, and opposed to her at another, the narrator yet adopts a third stance, a kind of middle distance,

from which he can see both positive and negative aspects of her character. Typical of this is a passage which occurs at the beginning of the novel:

> In their own fashion they cared deeply about politics, though not as politicians would have us care; they desired that public life should mirror whatever is good in the life within. Temperance, tolerance and sexual equality were intelligible cries to them; whereas they did not follow our Forward Policy in Tibet with the keen attention that it merits, and would at times dismiss the whole British Empire with a puzzled, if reverent, sigh. Not out of them are the shows of history erected: the world would be a gray, bloodless place were it entirely composed of Miss Schlegels. But the world being what it is, perhaps they shine out in it like stars. (HE, p. 41-42)

From the beginning, the passage shows a noted ambivalence. The Schlegels are women who care about politics, but they care about them "in their own fashion." Is this an admirable characteristic or a negative one? Are the politicians right or the Schlegels? That they do not follow the "Forward Policy" in Tibet is a second ambivalent statement. "Forward Policy" has connotations of progress, advance, but it has been used ironically before in regard to Mr. Schlegel. They dismiss the British Empire, but they do so with a "reverent" sigh. According to the narrator, these women are outside the mainstream of British politics; they are not the average nationalist or imperialist, but something else. The politics and histories they create are not "showy," but quiet, and their politics lead to a bloodless, uninteresting world. With the ironies centering on "shows," "Forward Policy," and "in their own fashion," the passage can be read either positively or negatively, and the last sentence, extremely tentative, "perhaps they shine out in it like stars," reinforces the ambiguity of the description. A common attitude of the narrator, the ambivalence shows a hanging back from judgement; it is the reader who must eventually determine the value.

But it is a technique which operates not only in regard to the Schlegels. Critics have seen Forster struggling vainly in the novel to give the Wilcoxes their due: ". . . the more closely we scrutinize the Wilcoxes, the less convinced we are that Forster has been able to compromise his original feelings."[7] The critics' statements come from a remembrance of dogmatic narrative assertions regarding the Wilcoxes, statements which are sometimes alarmingly negative in tone: "But the Wilcoxes have no part in this place, nor in any place. . . . They have swept into the valley and swept out of it, leaving a little dust and a little money behind" (HE, p. 246). But as seen in previous portraits, dogmatic assertions can always be denied; while simultaneously criticizing the Wilcoxes, the narrator comes out strongly in their defense:

> Brother and sister were not callous. They spoke thus, partly because they desired to keep Chalkeley up to the mark--a healthy desire in its way--partly because they avoided the personal note in life. All Wilcoxes did. It did not seem to them of supreme importance. Or it may be as Helen supposed: they realized its importance, but were afraid of it. Panic and emptiness, could one glance behind. They were not callous, and they left the breakfast-table with aching hearts. (HE, pp. 101-102)

In this passage, the narrator again exhibits a mixture of tentativeness and assertion. "A healthy desire in its way" is extremely tentative, because it is qualified by the last phrase, "in its way." But the narrator realizes simultaneously that Charles's discipline of Chalkeley is an excuse for the denial of a more important emotion, the emotion concerning Ruth's death. The Wilcoxes have never been taught to say "I," to understand the personal note in life, and, thus unthinkingly, they turn away from emotion. With the understanding, the narrator comes out in defense of Charles and Evie, repeating twice in the passage that they "are

not callous." The narrator's defense is a surprising one, clearly opposed to some of the more trenchant criticisms he makes, and an indication that his assessments of the Wilcoxes are less negative than the critics suppose.

Both opposed and in agreement with the Wilcoxes, the narrator yet adopts a third stance towards them, which is that of ambivalence. The technique works particularly well in regard to Henry:

> He himself, gazing at the wintry garden, is in appearance a steady man. His face was not as square as his son's, and indeed the chin, though firm enough in outline, retreated a little, and the lips, ambiguous, were curtained by a moustache. But there was no external hint of weakness. The eyes, if capable of kindness and good-fellowship, if ruddy for the moment with tears, were the eyes of one who could not be driven. (HE, p. 100).

In the passage, the narrator promotes two sides of Henry's personality. Henry "appears" to be steady, to have "no external hint of weakness," but it is clearly only appearance. For there are hints of weakness. His chin retreats a little, and the lips, though covered by a moustache, are indecisive, "ambiguous." Henry's physical and mental characteristics correspond closely; like the moustache which covers his lips, Henry uses the appearance of strength to cover weakness. His brusque, business-like manner, which is constantly noticed by the reader, hides a certain depth of feeling. He will "not be driven"; still he is capable of "kindness and good-fellowship." It is an ambivalent position which the narrator adopts in the passage. He both subtly praises Henry's personality, and covers the praise by couching it in terms of physical description. There is certainly no hint of "partisanship" here.

As well as adopting various stances towards the characters, the narrator also regards the reader in different ways. Often, he is as

dogmatic with the reader as he is with the characters. Such a statement as "It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise" (HE, p. 44), leaves the reader little room for question or contradiction. At other times, he subtly criticizes the reader in an attempt to protect his characters:

> Her mind darted from impulse to impulse, and finally marshalled them all in review. The practical person, who knows what he wants at once, and generally knows nothing else, will accuse her of indecision. But this was the way her mind worked. And when she did act no one could accuse her of indecision then. (HE, p. 77)

The narrator defends Margaret's impulsiveness by contrasting her with practical people, whom he thinks will accuse her of indecision. By contrasting them, however, he introduces a criticism of practicality, which is particularly damning. The practical person "knows what he wants at once," but generally knows "nothing else." Few readers would admit to being practical when it is defined in this way, and Margaret's impulsiveness is thus particularly difficult to criticize. By using this kind of rhetorical ploy, the narrator can continue to defend Margaret's personality, even without justifying it. "But this is the way her mind worked," represents an unquestioning acceptance of Margaret's thoughts which pays no heed to the reader's opinion. The narrator aligns himself with Margaret against the reader; if we are not to feel censured we must go along with the assessment.

This kind of assertiveness is offset by a remarkably shy and quiet stance towards the reader. Afraid of rebuke, the narrator adopts a position of boldness which he probably does not feel. Typical of this is his defense of Margaret over the station at King's Cross:

> To Margaret--I hope that it will not set the reader against her--the station of King's Cross had always suggested infinity. Its very situation--withdrawn a little behind the facile splendours of St. Pancras--implied a comment on the materialism of life. . . . If you think this ridiculous, remember that it is not Margaret who is telling you about it; and let me hasten to add that they were in plenty of time for the train. . . . (HE, p. 27)

The narrator's stance in the first sentence is a stance of boldness tempered by caution. He proposes Margaret's feeling and then backs off, thinking about the reader's reaction. His idea that the reader may find Margaret's reaction silly prompts him to boldly take the abuse on himself "remember that it is not Margaret who is telling you about it." The boldness is, however, clearly a facade, for after reminding the reader that he is doing the telling, the narrator quickly switches back to the story line, "and let me hasten to add that they were in plenty of time for the train." The narrator, though professing to defend Margaret, is exceedingly cautious himself, not wishing to be thought foolish by the reader. A different stance to the dogmatism of "But this is the way her mind worked," the passage shows the narrator concerned with, rather than indifferent to, the reader's sympathy.

The narrator's stance of boldness tempered by caution is an important one to grasp, for it recurs at several points in the novel where the reader must decide on the suitability or unsuitability of character action:

> To follow it is unnecessary. It is rather a moment when the commentator should step forward. Ought the Wilcoxes to have offered their home to Margaret? I think not. The appeal was too flimsy. It was not legal; it had been written in illness, and under the spell of a sudden friendship, it was contrary to the dead woman's intentions in the past, contrary to her very nature, so far as that nature was understood by them. . . . Is it credible that the possessions of the spirit

> can be bequeathed at all? Has the soul offspring? A wych-elm tree, a vine, a wisp of hay with dew on it--can passion for such things be transmitted where there is no bond of blood? No; the Wilcoxes are not to be blamed. The problem is too terrific, and they could not even perceive a problem. No; it is natural and fitting that after due debate they should tear the note up and throw it onto their dining-room fire. The practical moralist may acquit them absolutely. He who strives to look deeper may acquit them--almost. For one hard fact remains. They did neglect a personal appeal. (HE, pp. 107-108)

The contrast in the narrator's boldness and shyness becomes immediately apparent in the first two sentences. He bypasses the characters to assess the situation himself, but he conceives of his comment as merely artistic duty, something he must do. "It is rather a moment when the commentator should step forward" gives the impression of reluctance, of the narrator being pushed onto the stage. It is this same mixture of tentativeness and assertion which also typifies his assessment of the characters. At the beginning, he is tentative, posing a number of rhetorical questions, and replying with hesitation: "I think not." As the passage progresses, he becomes more assertive: "No, the Wilcoxes are not to be blamed," and "No; it is natural and fitting." Like the practical moralist, he tends to acquit the Wilcoxes "absolutely." But his position is never absolute. Though he understands the Wilcoxes' reaction, he is yet somewhat critical of them. They believe that Ruth's note is contrary to her intentions, but they may have only partially understood the intention, "so far as that nature was understood by them." The problem is too difficult, but the Wilcoxes cannot "even perceive a problem." The narrator's absolutism is thus ironically tentative. He tries to acquit the Wilcoxes absolutely, but he also sees the other side, and can, in the end, perhaps only acquit them "almost." The narrator

proceeds through stances of tentativeness and assertion, and back to tentativeness. As readers, we value his rationality, and must learn to look with suspicion at any attempt of absolute judgement.

It is Forster's concern for tolerant judgement, which should alert us to his ironical use of absolute judgement in Howards End. As shown previously, the narrator's dogmatism is easily undercut; Margaret is as practical as she is unpractical. But it is ironical use of dogmatism which critics of Howards End have consistently failed to understand, specifically in the passages which comment on Leonard's place in the novel:

> We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet. This story deals with gentlefolk, or with those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentlefolk. (HE, p. 58)

Critics have had major difficulty dealing with this statement; Forster's liberalism seems hardly to accord with it. The critical statements regarding the passage are thus somewhat evasive: "It does not mean that Forster refuses to think about the poor, but only that he cannot accommodate them in his art . . . the 'very poor' are beyond his imaginative reach."[8] The failure to see Forster's assertion as an ironical one is a result of a poor reading of the text. For Leonard is included in this novel, and although the narrator states that Leonard is neither in the abyss, nor very poor, the evaluations of characters categorically deny it. For Margaret, Leonard is a symbol of the abyss; her conversation with him leads her to be "distressed again by odours from the abyss" (HE, p. 124), and Leonard's wife, Jacky, arises out of the "abyss, like a faint smell" (HE, p. 122). But this is not all. Three different times in the novel, Leonard is referred to as a poor man. Helen

refers to him as "very poor," and "so poor" (HE, p. 139), and "very poor" (HE, p. 192), once again, using the words of the narrator to include what he has denied. In Helen's view, the "very poor" are included in this novel; the narrator's assessment is easily opposed. Thus, while the narrator pretends to be writing a decorous society novel, which ignores the very poor, the reader knows intuitively that poor men are included, that they cannot be ignored. The narrator's statement that he is unconcerned is a wrong-headed one, which shows that his assertions are remarkably tentative, that absolute judgement can be easily countered.

By dealing in ironic ways with absolute judgement, Forster "bounces" the reader into an acceptance of tolerant judgement in Howards End. It is a concern which pervades all Forster's writings, not only the novels, but also the essays. "What I Believe" shows most adequately Forster's distrust of absolutism and his belief in tolerance. He states at the outset of the essay that he "does not believe in Belief," but ironically contradicts himself throughout by saying, "I believe in the press," and "I believe in Parliament" (TC, p. 83). His beliefs are curiously badly explained; he supports his contentions in a round-about way, which denies any logic: "And since to ignore evidence is one of the characteristics of faith, I certainly can proclaim that I believe in personal relationships" (TC, p. 82). The reader is left wondering whether the man who writes is an idiot or a scoundrel, but Forster's contradictory method, a combination of assertion and timidity, is a deliberate one. He states that the new aristocracy will be that of the "sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky" (TC, p. 87), and he humorously considers himself as the leader of the aristocracy: "if anyone possesses the first three qualities I will let him in" (HE, p. 87). At the same time, however,

he belittles himself: comparing himself to the authority of Great Men, he says: "I always feel a little man's pleasure" (TC, p. 86), and proposing his ideas for the importance of friendship over the state, he remarks: "the State would down me" (TC, p. 83). It is Forster's combination of assertiveness and timidity in "What I Believe" which makes the first sentence of the essay comprehensible. He expresses his own beliefs, but does so in a casual way, which is never bullying to the reader. We see the flaws in the argument, the flaws in any system of belief, and are thus able to see, intelligently, the flaws inherent in our own. "Belief," in its best sense, is an individual thing, untainted by pressure from external force. In its worst sense, "belief" is a system forced onto an unwilling observer, and it is this kind of system which Forster denies in the opening sentence of the essay. In a highly rhetorical way, Forster shows that the individual's own values are paramount; the reader must discover for himself.

And the same discovery must necessarily occur in Howards End. Like Margaret, the reader must learn not to judge absolutely:

> Not even to herself dare she blame Helen. She could not assess her trespass by any moral code; it was everything or nothing. Morality can tell us that murder is worse than stealing, and group most sins in an order all must approve, but it cannot group Helen. The surer its pronouncements on this point, the surer may we be that morality is not speaking. Christ was evasive when they questioned Him. It is those that cannot connect who hasten to cast the first stone. (HE, p. 304)

Margaret's discovery is the discovery of an individual morality which denies "codes" of behaviour. Systems of morality can provide convenient ways of categorizing the crimes of murder or of stealing, but they cannot categorize the individual. The more rigid the assessment becomes, the

less any idea of right and wrong is present. Judgement of the individual is incorrect; only through "connecting" can we learn to understand. Margaret's final discovery is a "connecting" one; she neither judges Henry, nor Charles, nor Helen, but brings them together, finally, in Howards End. Critics have seen Margaret's discovery as an evasive one, which represents her inability to take a stand, and they see, wrongheadedly, a moral irresponsibility in the novel: ". . . the more one reads this novel, the more one is disturbed by its ethical evasiveness."[9] But Forster's so-called "evasiveness" is a deliberate ploy, a technique which allows the reader to discover for himself, a technique ". . . intended to set the reader at ease and to convince or persuade without bullying."[10] And though the narrator is often dogmatic for rhetorical effect, his final position is non-judgemental:

> Well, it is odd and sad that our minds should be such seed-beds, and we without power to choose the seed. But man is an odd, sad creature as yet, intent on pilfering the earth, and heedless of the growths within himself. He cannot be bored about psychology. He leaves it to the specialist, which is as if he should leave his dinner to be eaten by a steam-engine. He cannot be bothered to digest his own soul. Margaret and Helen have been more patient, and it is suggested that Margaret has succeeded--so far as success is yet possible. She does understand herself, she has some rudimentary control over her own growth. Whether Helen has succeeded one cannot say. (HE, p. 273)

The narrator's stance is a recognizable one of assertion and timidity. He comments assertively on universal issues, "man is an odd, sad creature," but he is simultaneously unwilling to judge on personal issues. It is only "suggested" that Margaret has succeeded, and that suggestion is clearly limited "so far as success is yet possible." Helen's progress is even less of a certainty: "one cannot say." By hanging back from absolute judgement, the narrator shows both a tolerance for the lives of

his characters and an implicit respect for the reader's good sense. We are given the opportunity of thinking for ourselves without being bullied, and we have, for an example, the tolerance of the narrator. Subtly, we have been "bounced" into an acceptance of tolerant understanding.

A close study of the narrative stance in Howards End shows neither the "partisanship" nor the "disturbing evasiveness" which the critics assign to it. Forster shows, through the narrator's various roles, that absolute judgement is wrong-headed, that it can be easily opposed. And, ironically, he also intimates that his own thesis is never absolute. For, like Leonard, we must learn that novelists are only to be used as "signposts" and are not to be mistaken for the "destination" (HE, p. 127). The final discovery is left with the reader.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

It is unnecessary, I think, to determine whether A Passage to India or Howards End is Forster's best novel, since they are works of such different modes. Howards End is primarily a comic novel with a self-conscious narrator, who consistently creates ironies which are beyond the characters' comprehensions, and sometimes beyond his own. A Passage to India is primarily tragic, and the narrator has stepped back from the action, giving little outspoken commentary. For these reasons, it would be largely unnecessary to choose between the two. What is necessary, however, is a more comprehensive analysis of Forster's works in order to see how the successes are accomplished and to avoid errors which may occur from a superficial reading.

Because most critics of Forster have failed to look closely at style, several critical errors have occurred in the analysis of Howards End. Critics realize that Forster is attempting to reconcile oppositions within the text between the business and the artistic minds, between the city and the country, between the present and the past. But they see Forster struggling vainly with the reconciliation. Since Margaret's perspective seems the dominant one, critics see the reconciliation as forced and ineffectual. But Forster consistently creates ironies which modify Margaret's perspective. She has trouble with her vision; she is as much a member of the sea as Leonard; and she is a cosmopolitan, an outgrowth of Henry's imperialism. In Howards End, Forster most adequately shows his belief in the individual. He offers the reader a vision of

tolerance, but the vision is never bullying or domineering; the individual's own values are paramount.

Any comprehensive study of Forster must necessarily be made in light of a close reading of the text. Several good studies on Forster's background, on his influences, and on his ideas have already been done. What is needed now is a complement to these works, an attempt to see how Forster's style is creating his ideas, how his style is working in harmony with, or in opposition to, the themes. This can best be accomplished by reference not only to the novels, but also to the essays, which have been largely ignored. It is only through this kind of reading that a typically Forsterian voice can be appreciated.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1]Lionel Trilling, E. M. Forster: A Study (London: The Hogarth Press, 1944), pp. 13-15.

[2]Trilling, p. 99.

[3]Trilling, p. 10.

[4]Trilling, p. 10.

[5]Frederick C. Crews, The Perils of Humanism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 93.

[6]Crews, p. 105.

[7]Crews, p. 96.

[8]Wilfred Stone, The Cave and the Mountain (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 238.

[9]Stone, p. 268.

[10]Richard Martin, The Love that Failed (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1974), p. 200.

[11]Martin, p. 14.

Chapter II

[1]E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1974), p. 39. Hereafter this work is cited as AN within the body of the text.

[2]Wilfred Stone, p. 186.

[3]Virginia Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," in The Death of the Moth and Other Essays (London: The Hogarth Press, 1943), p. 111.

[4]Alan Wilde, Art and Order: A Study of E. M. Forster (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 163-64.

[5]E. M. Forster, Howards End (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 20. Hereafter this work is cited as HE within the body of the text.

[6]E. M. Forster, Two Cheers for Democracy (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 83-84.
Hereafter, this work is cited as TC with the individual essay in quotation marks, and included within the body of the text.

[7]Geoffrey N. Leech, in A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (London: Longman, Green and Co. Ltd., 1969), pp. 59-71 speaks of "foregrounding" as a word or phrase which deviates from the "background" or norm of the language. Leech defines and discusses both "foregrounded regularities" (parallelism), and "foregrounded irregularities" (deviations in diction). In the case of the passage from AN, Forster shows a reluctance to accentuate the pun by keeping "tempestuous" in the background.

[8]For a discovery of the reworking of these puns, see The Manuscripts of Howards End, Oliver Stallybrass, ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), pp. 102, 45, 92, resp.

[9]Leech describes "plosives" "b," "d," "g," "p," "t," and "k" as the hardest consonantal sounds.

[10]Forster uses the term "rhythm" in Aspects of the Novel somewhat loosely to mean the recurrence of phrases or motifs within a novel. "Rhythm" may be an inexact word for such a phenomenon, but since it is Forster's term, I have used it here.

[11]Peter Burra, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," in Forster: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 27.

[12]Wilfred Stone, p. 268.

[13]Virginia Woolf, p. 111.

[14]Lionel Trilling, p. 31.

Chapter III

[1]Lionel Trilling, p. 102.

[2]Frederick Crews, p. 112.

[3]George Thomson, The Fiction of E. M. Forster (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), p. 188.

[4]Alice Bensen, "E. M. Forster's Dialectic: Howards End," Modern Fiction Studies, 1, No. 4 (1955), p. 17.

[5]Wilfred Stone says that Forster uses "a commercial vocabulary in dealing with spiritual problems" (p. 34). The "coinage" chapter in The Longest Journey is a good example of this.

[6]Lionel Trilling, p. 102.

[7]Trilling, p. 109.

Chapter IV

[1]Frederick Crews, p. 122.

[2]Alan Wilde, p. 117.

[3]Wilfred Stone, p. 237.

[4]E. M. Forster, The Longest Journey (Norfold, Conn.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), p. 115. Hereafter this work is cited as LJ within the body of the text.

[5]E. M. Forster, A Passage to India (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 317. Hereafter this work is cited as PI within the body of the text.

[6]Stone, p. 237.

[7]Stone comments on the recurrence of the rabbits and the hay, but he thinks that: "To follow out all the book's thematic repetitions, major and minor, would not much reward us . . ." (p. 274).

[8]Wilde, p. 117.

[9]Stone, p. 236.

Chapter V

[1]Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 3-20.
Booth distinguishes between "showing" (a modern phenomena), and "telling" (a pre-modern phenomenon), and says that "showing" is the more artistic method.

[2]I am thinking primarily of Woolf's later novels here such as Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, and The Waves.

[3]Booth, p. 155.

[4]Virginia Woolf, p. 112.

[5]Booth, p. 105.

[6]Wilfred Stone, p. 271.

[7]Frederick Crews, p. 122.

[8]Stone, p. 36.

[9]Stone, p. 258.

[10]Lionel Trilling, p. 30.

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